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HEART-HUMILIATION:

OR,

MISCELLANY SERMONS.

VII.

Prov. xxvii. 1.—Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

As man is naturally given to boasting and gloriation in something (for the heart cannot want some object to rest upon and take complacency in, it is framed with such a capacity of employing other things,) so there is a strong inclination in man towards the time to come, he hath an immortal appetite, and an appetite of immortality; and therefore his desires usually stretch farther than the present hour; and the more knowledge he hath above other creatures, the more providence he hath and foresight of the time to come. And so he often anticipates future things by present joy and rejoicing in them, as he accelerates in a manner by his earnest desires and endeavours after them. Now, if the soul of man were in the primitive integrity, and had as clear and piercing an eye of understanding as once it had, this providence of the soul would reach to the furthest period in time, that is, to eternity, which is the only just measure of the endurance of any immortal spirit. But since the eye of man's understanding is darkness, and his soul disordered, he can-

not see afar off, nor so clearly by far. He is now, as you say, sand-blind,—can see nothing at such a distance as beyond the bounds of time, can see nothing but at hand.

"To-morrow!" This is the narrow sphere of poor man's comprehension: all he can attain unto is to be provident for the present time. I call it all present, even that which is to come of our time, because, in regard of eternity it hath no parts, it hath no flux or succession, it is so soon cut off as a moment, as the twinkling of an eye; and so, though a man could see the end of it, it is but a short and dim sight, it is as if a man could only behold that which is almost contiguous with his eye. These then, are the two great ruins and decays of the nature of man: he is degenerated from God to created things, and seeks his joy and rest in them, in which there is nothing but the contrary, that is, vexation. And then he is fallen from apprehension of eternity, and the poor soul is confined within the narrow bounds of time; so that now all his providence is to lay up some perishing things for some few revolutions of the sun, for some few morrows, after which, though an endless morrow ensue, yet he perceives it not, and provides not for it; and all his glorying and boasting is only upon some presumptuous confidence and ungrounded assurance of the stability of these things for the time to come, which the wise man finding much folly in, he leaves us this counsel, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow,"—with a most pungent reason, taken partly from the instability and inconstancy of all these outward things in which men fancy an eternity of joy, and partly from the ignorance we have of the future events,—"for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

This boasting is an evil so predominant among men, that I know not any more universal in its dominion, or more hurtful to us, or displeasing to God. If it could be so embowelled unto you, as that you might truly discern the many monstrous conceptions of atheism and irreligion that are in it, it were worth the while; but I shall not digress upon the general head, I had rather keep within

the limits of the text. Self-boasting, you see, is that which is here condemned, and the very name is almost enough to condemn the nature of it. But there is another particular added to restrict that, "of to-morrow." Of all boastings the most irrational and groundless is that which arises from presumption of future things, which are so uncertain both in themselves and to us.

It is worth the observation, that whatever be the immediate and particular matter and occasion of men's gloriation, yet self is the great and ultimate object of it; it is self that men glory in, whatsoever created thing be the reason or occasion of it. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow." Here we might stand and take a look of the crookedness and perverseness of man's spirit since his departure from God. Self-love and pride were the first poison that the malice of Satan dropped into man's nature; and this is so strong and pestilent, that it has spread through the whole of mankind, and the whole in every man. Every one is infected, and all in every one. What are all the disordered affections in men, but so many streams from this fountain? And from these do men's affections flow next: so that there is nothing left uncorrupted, and free of this abominable and vile ingredient; all flowing from self and returning to it again, which is both sacrilegious and unnatural. There is heinous sacrilege in it,—the spoiling of the glorious divine Majesty of his indubitable prerogative and incommunicable right of all the glory and honour of his creature. There is no usurpation like this, for the worm that crawls on the footstool to creep up to the throne, and, as it were, to king it there, to deify and adore itself, and gather in all the tribute of praise, and glory, and love, that is only due to the Lord God Almighty; and invert and appropriate these to ourselves, which is, as if the axe should boast itself, as if it were no iron, or the staff, as if it were no timber. Hence it is, that of all evils in man's nature, God hath the most perfect antipathy and direct opposition against pride and self-love, because it is sacrilege and idolatry in the highest manner. It strikes

at the sovereignty and honour of God's name, which is dear to him as himself; it sets up a vile idol in the choicest temple of God, that is, in the heart; and this is the abomination of desolation. Other evils strike against his holy will; but this peculiarly points at the very nature and being of the Most High God, and so it is with the child of blasphemy—atheism is the very heart and life of it. And then it is most unnatural, and so monstrous and deformed. For, consider all the creation, though every one of them have particular inclinations towards their own proper ends, and so a happiness suitable to their own nature; yet how diverse, how contrary soever they be, there is no selfishness in them: they all concur and conspire to the good of the whole, and the mutual help of each other. If once that poison should infect the material world, which hath spoiled the spiritual; let once such a selfish disposition or inclination possess any part of the world, and presently the order, harmony, beauty, pleasure, and profit of the whole world should be interrupted, defaced, and destroyed. Let the sun be supposed to boast itself of its light and influence, and so disdain to impart it to the lower world, and all would run into confusion. Again, I desire you but to take a view of this humour in another's person, (for we are more ready to see others' evils than our own), and how deformed is it? So vile is self-seeking and self-boasting, that all men loathe it in others, and hide it from others. It disgraces all actions, how beautiful soever; it is the very bane of human society, that which looses all the links of it, and makes them cross and thwart one another.

But, alas! how much more easy is it, to paint out such an evil in a deformed visage, than to discern it in ourselves; and how many will hate it in the picture, who love and entertain it in their own persons! Such deceitfulness is intermingled with most desperate wickedness. I verily believe that it is the predominant of every man, good and bad, except in as far as it is mortified by grace. O the turnings and windings of the heart upon itself, in all the most apparently direct motions towards God

and the good of men! What serpentine and crooked circumgirations and reflections are there in the soul of man, when the outward action and expression seems most regular, and directed towards God's glory, and others' edification! Whoever of you have any acquaintance with your own spirits, cannot but know this, and be ashamed and confounded at the very thought of it. Self-boasting, self-complacency, self-seeking, all those being of kin one to another, are insinuated into your best notions, and infect them with more atheism before God, than the strongest pious affection can instil of goodness into them. How often will men's actions and expressions be outwardly clothed with a habit of condescendency and self-denial! And many may declaim with such zeal and vehemency against this evil, and yet, *latet anguis*, the serpent is in the bosom, and his venom may be diffused into the heart, and the poison of self-seeking and self-boasting may run through the veins of humble-like carriage and passionate discourses for self-denial. O that we could above all things establish that fundamental principle of Christianity in our hearts, even as we would be his disciples, truly and sincerely, and not in outward resemblance,—to deny ourselves, to renounce ourselves and our lusts, to make a whole resignation of our love, will, glory, and all to him, in whom to be lost it is only truly to find ourselves!

But, though man have this strange self-idolizing humour, and a self-glorying disposition, yet he is so poor and beggarly a creature, that he hath not sufficient matter within himself to give complacency to his heart; therefore he must borrow from all external things; and when there is any kind of propriety in, or title to them, then he glories in himself for them, as if they were truly in himself. We are creatures by nature most indigent, yet most proud, which is unnatural. No man is satisfied within himself (except the good man, Prov. xiv. 14,) but he goes abroad to seek it at the door of every creature, and when there are some plumes or feathers borrowed from other birds, like that foolish bird in the

fable, we begin to raise our crests, and boast ourselves, as if we had all these of our own, and were beholden to none: but as things that are truly our own will not be sufficient to feed this flame of gloriation, without the accession of outward things; so present things, and the present time, will not afford aliment enough, or fuel for this humour, without the addition of the morrow.

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow." No man's present possession satisfies him, without the addition of hope and expectation for the future; and herein the poverty of man's spirit appears, and the emptiness of all things we enjoy here, that our present revenue, as it were, will not content the heart. The present possession fills not up the vacuities of the heart, without the supply of our imaginations, by taking so much in upon the head of to-morrow, to speak so. As one prodigal and riotous waster, who cannot be served with his yearly income, but takes so much on [*i. e.* borrows so much] upon his estate, upon the next year's income, before it come, begins to spend upon it, before it come itself, and then, when it comes, it cannot suffice itself; so the insatiable and indigent heart of man cannot subsist and feed its joy and complacency upon the whole world, if it were presently in its possession, without some accession of hopes and expectations for the time to come. Therefore the soul, as it were, anticipates and forestalls the morrow, and borrows so much present joy and boasting upon the head of it, which, when it comes itself, perhaps it will not fill the hand of the reaper, let be pay for that debt of gloriation that was taken on upon its name, or compense the expectation which was in it; see Job xi. 18, 20; viii. 13—15. Hope is like a man's house to him, but to many it is no better than a spider's web. We have then a clear demonstration of the madness and folly of men, who hang so much upon things without, and suffer themselves to be moulded and modelled in their affections, according to the variety of external accidents. First of all consider the independence of all things upon us and our choice: there is nothing more unreasonable than to stir our passions upon

that which falls not under our deliberation, as the most part of things to come are. What shall be to-morrow, what shall come of my estate, of my places; what event my projects and designs shall have,—this is not in my hand: these depend upon other men's wills, purposes and actions, which are not in my power; and therefore, either to boast or glory upon that which depends upon the concurrence of so many causes unsubordinate to me, or to be vexed and disquieted upon the fore-apprehension of that which is not in my hand to prevent, is not only irreligious, as contrary to our Saviour's command, Matt. vi. but unreasonable also, as that which even nature condemns. "Take not thought for to-morrow;" and so by consequent, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow:" and there is one argument from the vanity of such affections, "Thou canst not make one hair black, nor add one cubit to thy stature," &c. To what purpose then, are either those vexations or gloriations, which cannot prevent evil, nor procure good? Why should our affections depend upon other motions? This makes a man the greatest slave and captive, so that he hath not the dominion and power of himself. But the vanity of such affections is the more increased, if we consider that supreme eternal will, by which all these things are determined; and therefore, it is in vain for creatures to make themselves more miserable, or put themselves in a fool's paradise, which will produce more misery afterwards, and that for those things which are bound up in that fatal chain of his eternal purpose. Then, in the next place, the folly of men appears from the inconstancy of these things. There is such an infinite variety of the accidents of providence, that it is folly for a man to presume to boast of any thing, or take complacency in it, because many things fall between the cup and the lip, the chalice and the chin, as the proverb is. There is nothing certain, but that all things are uncertain —that all things are subject to perpetual motion, revolution, and change—to day a city, to morrow a heap. And there is nothing between a great city and a heap

but one day; nothing between a man and no man but one hour. Our life is subject to infinite casualties; it may receive the fatal stroke from the meanest thing, and most unexpected; it is a bubble floating upon the water: for this world is a watery element, in continual motion with storms, and in these, so many poor dying creatures rise up, and swim and float awhile, and are tossed up and down by the wind and wave; and the least puff of wind or drop of rain, sends it back to its own element. We are a vapour appearing for a very little time—a creature of no solidity—a dream—a shadow and appearance of something; and this dream or apparition is but for a little time, and then it evanisheth, not so much into nothing, for it was little distant from nothing before, but it disappears rather. All human affairs are like the spokes of a wheel, in such a continual circumgiration, as a captive king, who was drawing Sesostris's chariot, said, when he was looking often behind him; the king of Egypt, Sesostris, demanded for what end did he look so often about him? Says he, "I am looking to the wheel, musing upon the vicissitudes and permutations of it, how the highest parts are instantly the lowest;" and this word repressed the king's vain glory. Now, in this constant wheeling of outward things, which is the soul that enjoys true quiet and peace,—even that soul that is fixed, as it were, in the centre upon God, that hath its abode in him; though the parts without be in a continual violent motion, yet the centre of the wheel is at much peace, is not violently turned, but gently complies to the changes of the other. And then consider the madness of this,—"Thou knowest not," &c. There are two reasons in the things themselves,—inconstancy, and independency on us; but this is as pressing as any,—our ignorance of them; they are wholly in the dark to us, as it were in the lower parts of the earth. As there is no more in our power, but the present hour, for to yesterday we are dead already, for it is past and cannot return, it is as it were buried in the grave of oblivion; and to to-morrow we are not yet born,

for it is not come to the light, and we know not if ever it will come; so there is no more in our knowledge, but the present hour. The time past, though we remember it, yet it is without our practical knowledge, it admits of no reformation by it; and the time to come is not born to us, and it is all one as if we were not born to it. And indeed, in the Lord's disposing of all affairs under the sun, after this method, there is infinite wisdom and goodness both, though at the first view, men would think it better, that all things went on after an uniform manner, and that men knew what were to befal them. Yet, I say, God hath herein provided for his own glory and the good of men—his own glory, while he hath reserved to himself, the absolute dominion, and perfect knowledge of his works, and exercises them in so great variety, that they may be seen to proceed from him; and for our good,—for what place were there for the exercise of many Christian virtues and graces, if it were not so? What place for patience, if there were no cross dispensations? What place for moderation, if there were no prosperity? If there were not such variety and vicissitude, how should the evenness and constancy of the spirit be known? Where should contentment and tranquillity of mind have place? For it is a calm in a storm properly, not a calm in a calm,—that is no virtue. If the several accidents of providence were foreseen by us, what a marvellous perturbation and disorder would it make in our duty! Who would do his duty out of conscience to God's command, to commit events to him? Now, there is the trial of obedience, "to make us go by a way we know not," and resign ourselves to the "all-seeing providence, whose eyes run to and fro throughout the earth." Therefore, that no grace may want matter and occasion of exercise; that no virtue may die out for want of fuel, or rust for lack of exercise, God hath thus ordered and disposed the world. There is no condition, no posture of affairs, in which he hath not left a fair opportunity for the exercising of some grace. Hath he shut up and precluded the acting of one

or many through affliction, then surely he hath opened a wide door, and given large matter for self-denial, humility, patience, moderation; and these are as precious as any that look fairest. In a word, I think the very frame and method of the disposing of this material world speaks aloud to this purpose. You see, when you look below, there is nothing seen but the outside of the earth, the very surface of it only appears, and there your sight is terminated; but look above, and there is no termination, no bounding of the sight,—there are infinite spaces, all transparent and clear without and within. Now, what may this present unto us? One says, it shews us that our affections should be set upon things above, and not on things below, seeing below there is nothing but an outward appearance and surface of things—the glory and beauty of the earth is but skin deep; but heavenly things are alike throughout, all transparent; nothing to set bounds to the affections; they are infinite, and you may enlarge infinitely towards them. I add this other consideration, that God hath made all things in time, dark and opaque, like the earth. Look to them, you see only the outside of them, the present hour, and what is beyond it you know no more than you see the bowels of the earth; but eternity is both transparent and conspicuous throughout, and infinite too. Therefore God hath made us blind to the one, that we should not set our heart, nor terminate our eyes upon any thing here; but he hath opened and spread eternity before us in the Scriptures, so that you may read and understand your fortune—your everlasting estate in it. He hath shut up temporal things and sealed them, and wills us to live implicitly, and give him the trust of them without anxious foresight; but eternity he hath unveiled and opened unto us. Certain it is, that no man, till he be fully possessed of God, who is an all-sufficient good, Psal. iv. can find any satisfaction in any present enjoyment, without the addition of some hope for the future. Great things without it will not content: for what is it all to a man if he have no assurance for the

time to come; and mean things with it will content. Great things with little hope and expectation, fill with more vexation instead of joy; and the greater they be, this is the more increased. Again, mean and low things, with great hopes and large expectations, will give more satisfaction; therefore, all mankind have a look towards the morrow, and labour to supply their present defects and wants, with hope or confidence of that. I would exhort you who would indeed have solid matter of gloriation, and would not be befooled into a golden dream of vain expectations of vain things, that ye would labour to fill up the vacuities of present things with that great hope, the hope of salvation, which will be as an helmet to keep your head safe in all difficulties, 1 Pet. i. 3; Heb. vi. 18, 19; Rom. v. 5. It is true, other men's expectations of gain and credit, and such things, do in some measure abate the torment and pain of present wants and indigencies; but certain it is, that such hope is not so sovereign a cordial to the heart, as to expel all grief, but leaves much vexation within; but then also, the frequent disappointment of such projects and designs of gain, honour, and pleasure, and the extreme unanswerableness of these to the desires and hopes of the soul, even when attained, must needs breed infinitely more anxiety and vexation in the spirit, than the hope of them could give of satisfaction; yea, the more the expectation was, it cannot choose but the greater shame and confusion must be. Therefore, if you would have your souls truly established, and not hanging upon the morrow uncertainly, as the most part of men are, get a look beyond the morrow, unto that everlasting day of eternity, that hath no morrow after it; "and see what foundation you can lay up for that time to come," as Paul bids Timothy counsel the rich men in the world, who thought their riches and revenues, their offices and dignities, a foundation and well-spring of contentment to them and their children, and are ready to say with that man in the parable, "Soul, take thy rest, thou hast enough laid up for many years!" "Charge

them," says he, &c. 1 Tim. vi. 16—19. O a charge worthy to be engraven on the tables of our hearts; worthy to be written on the ports of all cities, and the gates of all palaces! You would all have a foundation of lasting joy, says he; but why seek you lasting joy in fading things? and certain joy in uncertain riches, and solid contentment in empty things, and not rather in the living God, who is the unexhausted spring of all good things? Therefore, if you would truly boast of to-morrow, or sing a solid *requiem* to your own hearts, there is another treasure to be laid up in store against the time to come—the time only worthy to be called time, that is eternity; and that is, study to do good, and be rich in good works, in works of piety, of mercy, of equity, of sobriety. This is a better foundation for the time to come; or, rather receive and embrace the promise of eternal lifema deto such—that free and gracious promise of life in the gospel; and so you may supply all the wants and indigencies of your present enjoyments, with the precious hope of eternal life which cannot make ashamed. But what is the way that the most part of men take to mitigate and sweeten their present hardships? Even like that of the fool in the parable, Luke xii. They either have something laid up for many years, or else their projects and designs reach to many years. The truth is, they have more pleasure in the expectation of such things, than in the real possession; but that pleasure is but imaginary also. How many thoughts and designs are continually turning in the heart of man,—how to be rich, how to get greater gain, or more credit. Men build castles in the air, and fancy to themselves, as it were, new worlds of mere possible beings; and in such an employment of the heart, there is some poor deceiving of present sorrows, but at length they recur with greater violence. Every man makes romances for himself, pretty fancies of his own fortune, as if he had the disposing of it himself. He sits down, as it were, and writes an almanack and prognostication in his own secret thoughts, and designs

his own prosperity, gain, and advantage, and pleasures or joys; and when we have thus ranked our hopes and expectation, then we begin to take complacency in them, and boast ourselves in the confidence of them, as if there were not a supreme Lord who gives a law to our affairs, as immediately as to the winds and rains.

Now, that you may know the folly of this, consider the reason which is subjoined,—"For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." There is a concurrence of inconstancy in all things, and ignorance in us, which might be sufficient to check our folly of confident and presumptuous expectation from them, and gloriation in them; so that, whether we look about us to the things themselves, or within us to ourselves, all things proclaim the folly and madness of that which the heart of man is set upon. And this double consideration the apostle James opposes to the vain hopes and confident undertakings of men, chap. iv. 13, &c. Which place is a perfect commentary upon this text: he brings in an instance of the resolutions and purposes of rich men, for the compassing of gain by merchandize, whereby you may understand all the several designs and plots of men, that are contrived and ordered, and laid down in the hearts of men, either for more gain, or more glory, or more pleasure and ease. Now, the grand evil that is here reproved, is not simply men's care and diligence in using lawful means for their accommodation in this life, or yet their wise and prudent foresight in ordering of their affairs for attaining that end, for both these are frequently recommended and commended by the wise man, Prov. vi. 6, and xxiv. 27. But here is the great iniquity,—that men, in all these contrivings and actings, carry themselves as if they were absolute independents, without consideration of the sovereign universal dominion of God. No man almost reflects upon that glorious Being, which alone hath the negative and definitive sentence in all the motions and affairs of the sons of men, or considers, that it is not in man that walks to direct his paths; that when all our

thoughts and designs are marshalled and ordered, and the completest preparation made for reaching our intended ends, that yet the way of man is not in himself, that all these things are under a higher and more absolute dominion of the most high God. Whose heart doth that often sound unto? —"a man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directs his steps:" and so is not bound by any rule to conform his executions to our intentions; for he works all according to the counsel of his own will, and not ours; and therefore, no wonder that the product of our actions does not answer our intentions and devices, because the supreme rule and measure of them is above our power, and without our knowledge. And therefore, though there were never so many devices in the heart of man, never so wisely or lawfully contrived and ordered; though the mine be never so well prepared, and all ready for the firing of it; "yet the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand," Prov. xix. 21, and xvi. 9. That higher determination may blow up our best consultations or drown them, for man's goings are of the Lord; how then can a man understand his paths? Prov. xx. 24. And yet the most part of men, in all these things, lose the remembrance of this fatal and invincible subordination to God, and propose their own affairs and actions, as if themselves were to dispose of them; and when their own resolutions and projects seem probable, they begin to please themselves in them, in the forethought of what they will do, or what they may have or enjoy to-morrow afterward: there is a present secret complacency and gloriation, without any serious reminding the absolute dependence of all things upon the will of God, and their independence upon our counsels, without forecasting and often ruminating upon the perpetual fluctuation and constant inconstancy of human affairs; but, as if we were the supreme moderators in heaven and earth, so we act and transact our own business in a deep forgetfulness of him who sits in heaven, and laughs at all our projects and practices; and therefore, the Holy Ghost would have this secret but serious thought to season all our other purposes and consultations,

—"if the Lord will," &c. Whereas we ought to say and think this, it is scarce minded; and then we know not what shall be to-morrow, for our life itself is a vapour. Herein is a strong argument,—you lay your designs for to-morrow, for a year, for many years, and yet ye know not if ye shall be to-morrow. How many men's projects are cast beyond that time that is measured out in God's counsel! and what a ridiculous thing must that be to him, if it be not done with submissive and humble dependence on him! In a word, time is with child of innumerable things, conceived by the eternal counsel of God. Infinite and inconceivably various are those conceptions which the womb of time shall at length bring forth to light. Every day, every hour, every minute is travailing in pain, as it were, and is delivered of some one birth or another; and no creature can open its womb sooner, or shut it longer, than the appointed and prefixed season. There is no miscarrying as to him whose decrees do properly conceive them, though to us they seem often abortive. Now, join unto this, to make the allusion full, as long as they are carried in the womb of time, they are hid from all the world. The womb is a dark lodging, and no understanding nor eye can pierce into it, to tell what is in it, till it break forth; and, therefore, children born are said to come to the light: for till then, they are to us in a cloud of darkness, that we cannot tell what they are. So then, every day, every hour, every moment is about to bring forth that which all the world is ignorant of, till they see it; and oh! that then they understood it. We know not whether the morrow's or next hour's birth may be a proportioned child, or a monster; whether it will answer the figure and mould that is in our mind, or be misshapen and deformed to our sense. Men's desires and designs may be said to conceive, for they form an inward image and idea within themselves, to which they labour to make the product and birth of time conformable; and when it answers our preconceived form, then we rejoice as for a man-child. But for the most part it is a monster as to

our conception; it is an aberration from our rule; it is either mutilated and defective of what we desire, or superfluous or deformed, which turns our expectation into vexation, and our boasting into lamentation. But the truth is, time brings forth no monsters as to the Lord's decrees, which are the only just measures of all things. It may be said of every thing under the sun, as David speaks of himself in the womb; "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously formed in the lowest parts of the earth," &c. Psal. cxxxix. 15. His eyes see all their substance, yet being unperfect, and in his everlasting book all their members are written; the portraiture of every thing is drawn there to the life, and these in continuance are fashioned, just as they were written and drawn, and so they exactly correspond to his preconception of them; whatever deformity they may have as to us, yet they are perfect works, and beautiful to him.

VIII.

Isa. i. 10, 11. &c.—Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the word of the Lord, ye people of Gomorrah, &c.

It is strange to think what mercy is mixed with the most wrath-like strokes and threatenings. There is no prophet whose office and commission is only for judgment; nay, to speak the truth, it is mercy that premises threatenings. The entering of the law, both in the commands and curses, is to make sin abound, that grace may superabound, so that both rods and threatenings are the messengers of Jesus Christ, to bring sinners to him for salvation. Every thing should be measured and named by its end; so, call threatenings promises, call rods and judgments mercies; name all good, and good to you, if so be you understand the purpose of God in these. The shortest preaching in the Bible useth to express itself

what it means, though it be never so terrible. This is a sad and lamentable beginning of a prophet's ministry; the first word is, "to the heavens and to the earth:" a weighty and horrible regrate of this people, as if none of them were to hear, as if the earth could be more easily affected than they. The creatures are taken witnesses by God of their ingratitude, and then who shall speak for them? if heaven and earth be against them, who shall speak good of them? Will their own conscience? No certainly; it will, in the day of witnessing and judging, precipitate its sentence, and spare the judge the labour of probation; "a man's enemy shall be within his own house," though now your consciences agree with you. Nay, why doth the Lord speak to them? Because the people consider not, because conscience hath given over speaking to them, therefore the Lord directs his word to the dumb earth. Yet how gracious is he, as to direct a second word even to the people, though a sad word? It is a complaint of iniquity and backsliding, and such as cannot be uttered; yet it is mercy to challenge them, yea, to chasten them. If the Lord would threaten a man with pure and unmixed judgments, if he would frame a threatening of a rod of pure justice, I think it should be this, "I will no more reprove thee, nor chasten thee;" and he is not far from it, when he says, "Why shall ye be stricken any more?" &c. verse 5. As if he would say, It is in vain now to send a rod, ye receive no correction; I sent the rod, that it might open your hearts and ears to the word, and seal your instruction;—but to what purpose is it?—Ye grow worse and worse. Well, the prophet compares here sin and judgment, and the one far surmounts the other. Ye would think a desolate country, burnt cities, desolation made by strangers, a sufficient recompense of their corruption and misorders, of their forsaking and backsliding. Ye would think now, if your present condition and the land's, pressed you to utter Jeremiah's lamentation, a sadder than which is not almost imaginable, ye would think, I say, that you had received double for

all your sins. And yet, alas! how are your iniquities of infinite more desert? All that were mercy, which is behind infinite and eternal punishment. That there is room left for complaint, is mercy; that there is a remnant left, is mercy.

Now, to proclaim unto this people, and to convince them that their judgment was not severe, he gives them one word from God. And, indeed, it is strange, that when the rod is sent, be cause of the despising of the word, that after the despising of both word and rod, another word should come. Always [*i.e.* notwithstanding] this word is a convincing word, a directing word, and a comforting word. These use to be conjoined, and if they be not always expressed, we may lawfully understand them. We may join a consolation to a conviction, and close a threatening with a promise, if we take with a threatening. Jonah's preaching expressed no more but a threatening and denunciation of judgment; but the people understood it according to God's meaning, and made it a rule of direction, and so a ground of consolation. How inexcusable are we, who have all these expressed unto us, and often inculcated "line upon line, and precept upon precept," and yet so often divide the word of truth, or neglect it altogether. Most part fancy a belief of the promises, and neither consider threatenings nor commands. Some believing the threatenings, are not so wise for their own salvation, as to consider what God says more, but take it for his last word. Shall not Nineveh rise up in judgment against this generation? They repented at one preaching, and that a short one, and in appearance very defective; and yet we have many preachings of the Son of God and his apostles in this Bible—both law and gospel holden forth distinctly, and these spoken daily in our audience, and yet we repent not.

This is a strange preface going before this preaching, and more strange in that it is before the first preaching of a young prophet. He speaks both to rulers and people, but he gives them a name, such as certainly they would

not take to themselves; but seeing he is to speak the word of the Lord, he must not flatter them, as they did themselves. Is not this the Lord's people, his portion and inheritance which he chose out of the nations? Are not these rulers the princes of Judah, and the Lord's anointed? Were they not both in covenant with God, and separated from the nations both in privileges and profession? How then are they "rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah?" likened to the worst of the nations, and not likened to them, but spoken of, as if they were indeed all one. When ye hear the preface, ye would think that the prophet was about to direct his speech to Sodom and Gomorrah; but when ye look upon the preaching, ye find he means Judah and Jerusalem; and these are the rulers and people he speaks of. Certainly, according as men walk, so shall they be named and ranked. External privileges and profession may give a name before men, and separate men from men before the world, but they give no name, make no difference before God, if all other things be not suitable to these. "He is not a Jew," saith Paul, "who is one outwardly, but he who hath that circumcision in the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." Outward profession and signs may have praise of men, but it is this that hath praise of God, Rom. ii. 28, 29, "Circumcision and uncircumcision, baptism or unbaptism availeth nothing, but a new creature." A baptized Christian, and an unbaptized Turk are alike before God, if their hearts and ways be one, Gal. vi. 15. All Christians profess faith, and glory in baptism, but it avails nothing, except "it work by love," Gal. v. 6.

Now, what name shall we give you? How shall our rulers be called? How shall ye, the people, be called? If we shall speak the truth, we fear it instruct you not, but irritate you; yet the truth we must speak, whether ye choose or whether ye refuse. Ye would all be called Christians, the people of God; but we may not call you so, except we would flatter you, and deceive you by flattering, and murder you by deceiving. We would gladly

name you Christians in the spirit, saints chosen and precious. O that we might speak so to the rulers and people! but, alas, we may not call you so, except ye were so indeed; we may not call you Christians, lest ye believe yourselves to be so. And yet, alas, ye will think yourselves such, speak what we can. Would ye know your name then? I perceive you listen to hear what it is. But understand, that it is your name before God, which bears his account of you. What matter of a name among men? It is often a shadow without substance, a name without the thing. If God name you otherwise, you shall have little either honour or comfort in it; when men bless you and praise you, if the Lord reckon you among the beasts that perish, are ye honoured indeed? Well, then, hear your name before God, what account hath he of you? Ye rulers are rulers of Sodom, and ye people are people of Gomorrah. And if ye think this a hard saying, I desire you will notice the way that the prophet Isaiah takes to prove his challenge against them, and the same may be alleged against rulers and people now. We need no proof but one of both; see verse 23. Thy princes are rebellious, because, though they hear much against their sins, yet they never amend them, they pull away the shoulder; if they hear, yet they harden their heart. Is there any of them hath set to to pray in their families, though earnestly pressed? Well, what follows? "Every one loves gifts." Covetousness, then, and oppression proves rulers to be rulers of Sodom. "Shall their houses stand, shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar?" Jer. xxii. 15. No certainly; men shall one day take up a proverb against them. Woe to him that increases that which is not his, and loadeth himself with thick clay: they shall be for booties to the Lord's spoilers, Hab. ii. 6. Woe to them, for they have consulted shame to their houses, and sinned against their own soul. Their design is to establish their house, and make it eminent, but they take a compendious way to shame and ruin it. Alas, it is too public, that rulers seek their own things, for them-

selves and their friends; and for Jesus and his interests they are not concerned: but are ye, the people, any whit better? O that it were so! But alas, when ye are involved in the same guiltiness, I fear ye partake of their plagues! What are ye then? "People of Gomorrah." Is not the name of God blasphemed daily because of you? Are not the abominations of the Gentiles the common disease of the multitude, and the very reproach of Christianity? Set apart your public services and professions, and is there any thing behind in your conversation, but drunkenness, lying, swearing, contention, envy, deceit, wrath, covetousness, and such like? Have not the multitude of them been as civil, and carried themselves as blamelessly, and without offence, as the throng of our visible church? What have ye more than they? It is true, ye are called Christians, and ye boast in it. Ye know his will, and can speak of points of religion, can teach and instruct others, and so have, as it were, in your minds a form and method of knowledge,—the best of you are but such; but I ask, as Paul did the Jews in such a case, "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself; thou that makest a boast of the law, through breaking of it, dishonourest thou God," Rom. ii. 17—23. Why then, certainly all thy profession and baptism avail nothing, and will never extract thee from the pagans, with whom thou art one in conversation. Thy profession is so far from helping thee in such a case, that it shall be the most bitter ingredient in thy cup of judgment, for it is the greatest aggravation of thy sin, for through it God's name is blasphemed. "If they had not known, they had not had sin." Pagans' sin is no sin in respect of Christians. If ye consider Christ's sermon, Matt. xi. ye will say Isaiah is a meek and moderate man in regard of him; Isaiah calls them people of Gomorrah, but Christ will have them worse, and their judgment more intolerable than theirs. And that not only the profane of them, but the civil and religious-like who believed not in him. Well, then, here is the advantage ye get of your name of

Christianity, of your privilege of hearing his word daily; ye who never ponder it, to tremble at it, or to rejoice in it, who cannot be moved either to joy or grief for spiritual things; neither law nor gospel moves the most part of you. I say, here is all your gain,—ye shall receive a reward with Gentiles and pagans; yea, ye shall be in a worse case than they in the day of the Lord. The civil Christian shall be worse than the profane Turk; and ye shall not then boast that ye were Christians, but shall desire that ye had dwelt in the place where the gospel had never been preached. It is a character of the nations, "that they call not on God," and of heathen families, "that they pray not to him," Jer. x. 25, and wrath must be poured on them. What, then, are the most part of you? Ye never bow a knee in secret or in your families, to God. Your time is otherways employed; ye have no leisure to pray twice or thrice a-day alone, except when ye put on your clothes ye utter some ordinary babblings. Ye cannot be driven to family worship. Shall not God rank you in judgment with those heathen families? Or shall it not be more tolerable for them than for you? And are not the most part of you every one given to covetousness, your heart and eye after it, seeking gain and advantage more than the kingdom of heaven? Doth not every one of you, as you have power in your hand, oppress one another, and wrong one another? Now, our end in speaking thus to you, is not to drive you to desperation. No, indeed; but as there was a word of the Lord sent to such by Isaiah, so we bring a word unto you. That which ruins you, is your carnal confidence. Ye are presumptuous as this people, and cry, "the temple of the Lord," the work of the Lord, &c. as if these would serve you. Know therefore, that all these will never cover you in the day of wrath. Know there is a necessity to make peace with God, and your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of a profession, and external privileges and duties, or else ye shall be as far from the kingdom of heaven as Sodom and Gomorrah. We speak

of rulers' sins, that ye may mourn for them, lest ye be judged with them. If ye do not mourn for them in secret, know that they are your sins, ye are companions with them. Many fret, grudge, and cry out against oppression, but who weeps in secret? Who pray and deprecate God's wrath, lest it come upon them? And while it is so, the oppression of rulers becomes the sin of the oppressed themselves.

"Hear the word of the Lord." It were a suitable preparation for any word that is spoken, to make it take impression, if it were looked on "as the word of the Lord," and "law of our God." And truly no man can hear aright unless he hear it so. Why doth not this word of the Lord return with more fruit? Why do not men tremble or rejoice at it? Certainly, because it is not received as God's word. There is a practical heresy in our hearts, which rather may be called atheism—we do not believe the Scriptures. I do not say men call it in question; but I say, ye believe them not. It is one thing to believe with the heart, another thing not to doubt of it. Ye doubt not of it, not because ye do indeed believe it, but because ye do not at all consider it. It is one thing to confess with the mouth, and another thing to believe with the heart; for ye confess the Scriptures to be God's word, not because ye believe them, but because ye have received such a tradition from your fathers; have heard it from the womb unquestioned. O that this were engraven on your heart!—that these commands, these curses, these promises are divine truths, the words and the oath of the holy One. If every word of truth came stamped with his authority, and were received in the name of God himself, what influence would it have on the spirits and the practices of men? This would be a great reformer, would reform more in a month, than church and state hath done these many years. Why are rulers and people not converted and healed for all that is spoken? Here it is, "who believes our report?" Who believes that our report is thy own testimony, O Lord? When ministers

threaten you in God's name,—if his authority were stamped on the threatening, if men did seriously apprehend it were God's own voice, would they not tremble? When the gospel and the joyful sound comes forth, if he apprehended that same authority upon it, which ye who are convinced, believe to be in the law, would ye not be comforted? Finally, I may say, it is this point of atheism, of inconsideration and brutishness, that destroys the multitude, makes all means ineffectual to them, and retards the progress of Christians. Men do not consider, that this word is the word of the eternal, and true, and faithful God, and that not one jot of it will fail. Here is a point of reformation I would put you to; if ye mind indeed to reform, let this enter into your hearts and sink down, that the law and gospel is the word of God, and resolve to come and hear preachings so, as the voice "of Jesus Christ, the true and faithful witness." If ye do not take it so now, yet God will judge you so at the end. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that hears not you, hears not me." If ye thought ye had to do with God every Sabbath, would ye come so carelessly, and be so stupid and inconsiderate before the Judge of all the earth. But ye will find in the end, that it was God whom ye knew not.

IX.

Isa. i. 11.—To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, saith the Lord, &c.

This is the word he calls them to hear, and a strange word. Isaiah asks, what mean your sacrifices? God will not have them. I think the people would say in their own hearts, What means the prophet? What would the Lord be at? Do we anything but what he commanded us? Is he angry at us for obeying him? What means this word? Is he not repealing the statute

and ordinance he had made in Israel? If he had reproved us for breach of commands, for omission and neglect of sacrifices, we would have taken with it; but what means this reproof for well-doing? The Lord is a hard master. If we neglect sacrifices, and offer up the worst of the flock, he is angry; if we have a care of them, and offer them punctually, and keep appointed days precisely, he is angry. What shall we do to please him? I think many of you are put to as great a non-plus, when your prayers and repentance and fasting are quarrelled; do ye not say in your hearts, we know not what to do? Ministers are angry at us if we pray not, and our prayers they cry out against; they command us to repent and fast, and yet say that God will abhor both these. This is a mystery, and we shall endeavour to unfold it to you from the word. It concerns us to know how God is pleased with our public services and fastings: for the most part of people have no more religion. Ye all, I know, desire to know what true religion is. Consult the Scriptures, and search them, for there ye shall find eternal life. We frame to ourselves a wrong pattern and copy of it, and so we judge ourselves wrong. Our narrow spirits do not take in the latitude of the Scripture's religion, but taking in one part we exclude another, and think God rigid if it be not taken off our hand so. But, I pray, consider these three things, which seem to make up the good old way, the religion of the Old and New Testaments: *First,* Religion takes in all the commands,—it is universal, "hath respect to all the commandments," Psal. cxix. 6. It carries the two tables in both hands, the first table in the right hand, and the second in the left. These are so entirely conjoined, that if you receive not both, you cannot receive any truly. *Secondly,* It takes in all the man, his soul and spirit as well as his body; nay, it principally includes that which is principal in the man, "his soul and spirit, his mind and affections." If ye divide these, ye have not a man present but a body; and what fellowship can bodies have with him who is a

Spirit? If ye divide these among themselves, ye have not a spirit indeed present: if the mind be not present, surely the heart cannot, but if the mind be, and the heart away, religion is not religion, but some empty speculation. The mind cannot serve but by the heart: where the heart is, there a man is reckoned to be. *Thirdly*, It takes in Jesus Christ as all, and excludes altogether a man's self. "He worships God in the spirit," but he rejoices not in himself, and in his spirit, "but in Jesus Christ, and hath no confidence in himself, or the flesh," Phil. iii. 3, 8. It includes the soul and spirit, and all the commands, but it denies them all, and embraces Jesus Christ by faith, as the only object of glorying and trusting in. All a man's self becomes dross in this consideration. Now, the first of these is drawn from the last, therefore it appears first—I say, an endeavour in walking in every thing commanded, of conforming our way to the present rule and pattern, is a stream flowing from the pure heart within. A man's soul and affections must once be purified, before it sends out such streams in conversation. And from whence doth that pure heart come? Is it the fountain and original? No certainly, "the heart is desperately wicked above all things," and how will it cleanse itself? But this purity proceeds from another fountain,—from faith in Jesus Christ: and it is this that lies nearest the uncreated fountain, Christ himself; it is the most immediate conduit, the mouth of the fountain, or the bucket to draw out of the deep wells of salvation. All these are conjoined in this order, 1 Tim. i. 5—"The end of the commandment is love." Ye know love is said elsewhere to be the fulfilling of the law; and when we say love, we mean all duties to God and man, which love ought immediately to principle. Now this love proceeds from a pure heart, cleansed and sanctified, which pure heart proceeds from faith unfeigned. So then, we must go up in our searching from external obedience all alongst, till we arrive at the inward fountain of Christ dwelling in us by faith; and then have ye found true religion in-

deed. Now, ye may think possibly, we have used too much circumlocution: what is all this to the present purpose? Yes, very much. Ye shall find the Lord rejecting this people's public worship and solemn ordinances upon these three grounds,—either they did not join with them the observation of weightier commands, or they did not worship him in them with their spirits; had not souls present, or they knew not the end and use for which God had appointed these sacrifices and ceremonies; they did not see to the end of all, which was Jesus Christ.

First, then, I say, the people was much in external sacrifices and ceremonies, commanded of God, but they were ignorant of the end of his commands, and of the use of them. Ye know in themselves they had no goodness, but only in relation to such an end as he pleased they should lead to; but they stayed upon the ceremony and shadow, and were now led to use it as a means for such an end; and so, though they fancied that they obeyed, and pleased God, yet really they wholly perverted his meaning and intention in the command; therefore doth the Lord plead with them in this place for their sacrificing, as if it had been murder. They used to object his commands. What, says the Lord, did I command these things? Who required them? Meaning certainly, who required them for such an end, to take away your sin. Who required them but as a shadow of the substance to come? Who required them but as signs of that Lamb and sacrifice to be offered up in the fulness of time? And forasmuch as ye pass over all these, and think to please me with the external ceremony, was that ever my intent or meaning? Certainly ye have fancied a new law of your own, I never gave such a law; therefore it is said, Psal. i. 13—God pleads just after this manner, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" &c. and Micah vi. 7, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" He who hath no pleasure in sinful men, what pleasure can he have in beasts? Therefore, it was to signify to them, (who though

God would be pleased with them for their offering,) that he could not endure them; it was worse to him to offer him such a recompence, than if they had done none at all. He is only well-pleased in his well-beloved Son; and when they separate a lamb or a bullock from the well-beloved, what was it to him more than "a dog's neck or swine's flesh?" It was his creature, as these are, and no more, Isa. lxvi. 3. Now that they looked never beyond the ceremonies, is evident, because they boasted in them; they used to find out these as a remedy of their sins, and a mean to pacify God's wrath, Micah vi. 6. Paul bears witness of it, 2 Cor. iii. 13—15. Moses had a vail of ceremonies over his face, and the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that mystery, Christ Jesus, but their minds were blinded, and so to this day in the reading of the scriptures: and this vail of hardness of heart shall be done away when Christ returns to them again. Now, I say, it is just so with us. There was never a people liker other than we are like the Jews. We have many external ordinances, preaching, hearing, baptism, communion, reading, singing, praying in public, extraordinary solemnities of fasting and thanksgiving, works of discipline and government, public reproof to sinners, confessions and absolutions. What would ye think if we should change the terms of sacrifices and new moons, and speak all this to you? To what purpose is the multitude of your fasts and feasts, of your preachings and communions, of your praying in secret, and in your families, of conference and prayer with others, of running to and fro to hear preaching, to partake of the Lord's table? I am full of them, I delight not in them: when ye come here on the Sabbath, who required at your hand to tread my courts? Come no more to hear the word, run no more after communions, seek no more baptism to your children, call no more solemn assemblies, it is all iniquity. O, say ye, that is a strange preaching indeed! must we pray no more, hear no more, sing no more? Did not God command these? why do ye discharge them? We do not mean so, that these should not be, but they should be in

another way: all these want the soul and life of them, which is Jesus Christ in them. Do ye not think yourselves religious, because ye frequent these? The multitude of the people think that these please God, and pacify his wrath: ye have no other thing in your mind but these. If ye can attain any sorrow or grief for sin, or any tears to signify it, presently you absolve yourselves for your repentance. The scandalous who appear in public, think the paying of a penalty to the judge, and bowing the knee before the congregation, satisfy God. Ye miss nothing when ye have these. I speak to the professors of religion also, who pretend to more knowledge than others, when ye have gone about so many duties, ye are well satisfied if ye get liberty in them. If ye can satisfy yourselves, ye doubt not of God's satisfaction; and if ye do not satisfy yourselves in your duties, ye cannot believe his satisfaction. Ye get the ordinance, and miss nothing. Now, I say, in all this ye do not reach to the end of this ministry, Jesus Christ; ye do not stedfastly behold him, to empty yourselves in his bosom, to turn over all the unrighteousness of your holy things upon him who bears it; that which pleaseth you, is not "he in whom the Father is well-pleased," but the measure of your own duty. O, the establishing of our own righteousness is the ruin of the visible Church! this is the grand idol, and all sacrifice to it. Know therefore, that the most part of your performances are abomination and iniquity, because ye have so much confidence in them, and put them not upon Christ as filthy rags, or do not cover them with his righteousness, as well as your wickedness. I know ye will say, that ye are not satisfied with them, and that it is still the matter of your exercise. Well, I affirm, in the Lord's name, from that ground, that ye have confidence in them, for if your diffidence and disquietness arise from it, your confidence and peace must come from it also. Is there any almost that maintain faith, except when their own conditions please them well? and that faith I may call no faith, at least not pure and cleanly entire faith. As for the mul-

titude of you, you must know this, that God is not pleased with your prayers, and fasting, and hearing, &c. because ye have such an esteem of them, because ye can settle yourselves against all threatenings, and never once remember of Jesus Christ, or consider the end of his coming into the world; because ye find no necessity of pardon for your prayers and righteousness, but stretch the garment of these over the uncleanness of your practices. What delight hath the Lord in them, when they are put in his Son's place? Will he not be jealous that his Son's glory be not given to another.

In the *second* place, the Lord rejects their performances, because there was nothing but a mere shadow of service, and no worshipping of God in the Spirit. Ye know what Christ saith, "God is a Spirit, and he that worships him must do it in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24. It is the heart and soul that God delights in, "My son give me thy heart," for if thou give not thy heart, I care for nothing else. The heart is the whole man. What a man's affection is, that he is. Light is not so,—it brings not the man alongst with it. Christ Jesus hath given himself for us, and he requires that we offer ourselves to him. If we offer a body to frequent his house, our feet to tread in his courts, our ears to hear his word, what cares he for it, as long as the soul doth not offer itself up in prayer or hearing? And this was the sin of this people, Isaiah xxix. 13, "They draw near with the lips, and their heart is far from the Lord." Now are we not their children, and have succeeded to this? Is there any thing almost in our public services, but what is public? Is there any thing but what is seen of men? Ye come to hear, ye sit and hear, and is there any more? The most part have their minds wandering, no thoughts present; for your thoughts are removed about your barns and corns, or some business in your head; and if any have their thoughts present, yet where are affections, which are the soul and spirit of religion, without which it is no true fire but wild-fire, if it be not both burning and shining? Are ye serious in these ordi-

nances? Or rather, are ye not more serious in any thing beside? And now, especially, when God's providence calls you to earnest thoughts, when it cries to all men to enter into consideration of their own ways. I pray you, is there any soul-affliction in your fasts even for a day? Is there any real grief or token of it? Not a fast in Scripture without weeping: we have kept many, and have never advanced so far. Shall the Lord then be pacified? Will not his soul abhor them? How shall they appease him for your other provocations, when they are as oil to the flame, to increase his indignation? The most part of Christians are guilty here; we come to the ordinances, as it were, to discharge a custom, and perform a ceremony, that we may have it to say to our conscience that it is done, and there is no more intent and purpose. We do not seek to have soul-communion with God. We come to sermon to hear some new thing, or new truth, or new fashion of it; to learn a notional experience of cases. But alas, this is not the great purpose and use of these things. It is to have some new sense of those things we know. We know already, but we should come to get the truth more received in our love, to serve God in our spirits, and to return to him ourselves in a sacrifice acceptable. This is the greater half, if not the whole of religion,—love to Jesus Christ who loved us, and living to him, because he died for us, and living to him because we love him. Now, all our ordinances and duties should be channels to carry our love to him, and occasions of venting our affections.

Thirdly, The Lord rejected this people's services, because they were exact and punctual in them, and neglected other parts of his commandments; and this is clearly expressed here, "I will not hear your prayers," though there be many of them. Why? "Your hands are full of blood." Ye come to worship me, and pray to me, and yet there are many abominations in your conversation, which you continue in, and do not challenge in yourselves. Ye have unclean hands; and shall your prayers be accepted, which should come up with pure hands? They

took his covenant in their mouth, and offered many sacrifices, but what have we to do with these things, saith the Lord, since ye hate to be reformed, since ye hate personal reformation of your lives, and in your families? What have ye to do to profess to be my people? Psal. l. 16, 17. The Lord requires an universality, if ye would prove sincerity: if ye have respect to any of his commands, as his commands, then will ye respect all. If ye be partial, and choose one duty that is easy, and refuse another harder, ye will come to the church and hear, but ye will not pray at home. Ye will fast in public, but not in private. Then, says the Lord, ye do not at all obey me, but your own humour; ye do not at all fast unto me, but unto yourselves. As much as your interest lies in a duty, so much are ye carried to it. And I take this to be the reason why many are so eager in pursuing public ordinances, following communions, and conferences with God's people, ready to pray in public rather than alone. If ye would follow them into their secret chamber, how much indifferency is there! how great infrequency, how little fervency! Well, says the Lord, did ye pray to me when ye prayed among others? No, ye prayed either to yourselves, or the company, or both. Did ye seek me in a communion? No, saith the Lord, ye sought not me, but yourselves: if ye sought me indeed with others, you would be as earnest, if not more, to seek me alone, Zech. vii. 6. And again, the Lord especially requires the weightier matters of the law to be considered. As it was among the Jews, their ceremonies were commanded, and so good; but they were not so much good in themselves as because they were means appointed for another end and use. But the moral law was binding in itself, and good in itself, without relation to another thing; and therefore Christ lays this heavy charge to the Pharisees, "ye tithe mint and anise," Matt. xxiii. 23. "Woe unto you, for ye neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ye ought to have done, and not left the other undone." Are there not many who would think it a great fault to stay away from

the church on the Sabbath or week day, and yet will not stick to swear, to drink often? "Woe unto you, for ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel;" therefore are the prophets full of these expostulations. The people seemed to make conscience of ceremonies and external ordinances, but they did not order their conversation aright; they did not execute judgment, and relieve the oppressed, did not walk soberly, did not mortify sinful lusts, &c. Alas, we deceive ourselves with the noise of a covenant, and a cause of God; we cry it up as an antidote against all evils, use it as a charm, even as the Jews did their temple; and, in the mean time, we do not care how we walk before God, or with our neighbours: well, thus saith the Lord, "trust ye not in lying words," &c. Jer. vii. 4, 5, 6. If drunkenness reign among you, if filthiness, swearing, oppression, cruelty reign among you, your covenant is but a lie, all your professions are but lying words, and shall never keep you in your inheritance and dwellings. The Lord tells you what he requires of you, "is it not to do justly, and walk humbly with God," Mic. vi. 7. This is that which the grace of God teaches, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly towards your God, your neighbour, and yourself," Tit. ii. 11, 12; and this he prefers to your public ordinances, your fasting, covenanting, preaching, and such like. "Is not this to know me?" saith the Lord, Jer. xxii. 15, 16. You think you know God, when you can discourse well of religion, and entertain conferences of practical cases. You think it is knowledge to understand preachings and Scripture; but thus saith the Lord, "to do justly to all men, to walk humbly towards God, to walk soberly in yourselves," is more real knowledge of God, than all the volumes of doctors contain, or the heads of professors. Is this knowledge of God to have a long flourishing discourse containing much religion in it? Alas, no! to do justly, to oppress none, to pray more in secret, to walk humbly and soberly, this is to know the Lord. Practice is real knowledge indeed: it argues, that what a man

knows, he receives in love, that the truth hath a deep impression on the heart, that the light shines into the heart, to inflame it. What is knowledge before God? As much as principles, affection and action, as much as hath influence on your conversations; if you do not, and love not what you know, is that to know the Lord? Shall not your knowledge be a testimony against your practice, and no more?

X.

Isa. i. 16.—Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, &c.

If we would have a sum of pure and undefiled religion, here it is set down in opposition to this people's shadow of religion, that consisted in external ordinances and rites. We think that God should be as well pleased with our service as we ourselves, therefore we choose his commands which our humour hath no particular antipathy against, and refuse others. But the Lord will not be so served: as he will not share with the world, and divide the soul and service of man with creatures, so as mammon should get part, and he his part. No, if we choose the one, we must refuse the other; for so will he not suffer his word and commands to be divided: there must be some universality in respect of the gospel and the law, and a conjunction of these two, or we cannot please him.

If religion do not include the gospel, we are yet upon the old covenant of works, according to which none can be justified. If it do not include the law in the hands of a mediator, then "we turn the grace of God unto wantonness." If it shut out Jesus Christ and have no use of him, how can either we or our performances stand or be accepted before his holy eyes? If it exclude the law that Christ came to establish, how can he be pleased with our religion? both of these offer an indignity to the Son of God. The sum, then, of Christian religion is believing and

sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience. That is the root and fountain, this is the fruit and stream; justification of our persons, and sanctification of our lives and hearts. "This is pure religion and undefiled." And therefore Isaiah says, "wash you, make you clean,"—cleanse in the only true fountain of Christ's blood. It is not your purifications of the law, your many washings with water and hyssop; "it is not the blood of bulls and goats can purge your consciences from dead works:" they do but purify your flesh, but cannot wash your souls, worse defiled. This blood of Jesus Christ is that clean water that he must sprinkle on you, if you would be clean. If you take any other water, any other righteousness but his, and wash thyself therewith, suppose it be snow water that washeth cleanest,—thy most exact conversation; yet, "he will plunge thee in the mire, till thine own clothes abhor thee," Job ix. 30, 31. Now, when you have washed your persons, "ye need not save to wash your feet," says Christ. Your daily conversation, reform it in the virtue of that blood, for "we are not called to uncleanness, but unto holiness;" and therefore, "put away the evil of your doings," &c. God hath put away the guilt of your doings by justification, now put ye away the evil of your doings by sanctification, &c. And if ye would know what sanctification is, "cease to do evil;" do not return to the old puddle to wallow in it. Ye that are cleansed by this blood, O think how unbeseeming it is to you, to defile yourselves again with those things ye are cleansed from! but now, "learn to do well." Ye are given up to Christ, ye must be his disciples, and he will teach you. "Learn of me," saith Christ,—you need no other law almost but his example. He is a visible and speaking law, yet seek judgment. As ye ought to look on my example, so especially ponder that word and rule of practice, and behaviour that I have left behind me, and given out as the lawgiver of the redeemed. Have I redeemed you; and should not I be the redeemed and ransomed one's king? Is there any society in the world wants a law, order, and government?

Neither must ye who are delivered from bondage, enfranchised and made free indeed. Now, ye should of all men most live by a law. And when ye know that rule, then apply it to your several vocations and callings. Let the magistrate act according to it, and every man according to it. Religion consists not in a general notion, but condescends to our particular practice, to reform it. You see then what we would press upon your consciences. It is true religion that we would have you persuaded unto. All men have some kind of religion, even heathens who worship idols; but the true religion respects the true and living God. Now, what is it to worship the true and living God? What is the service of him that may be called religion indeed? Should we be the prescribers of it? No certainly, he must carve solely in that, or else it cannot please him; therefore "to the law and to the testimony:" if ye speak not according to this, and worship not according to this word of God, it is because there is no light in you. Ye may have a religion before men pure and undefiled, but if it be not so before God and the Father, I pray you to what purpose is it? I am sure it is all lost labour; nay, it is labour with loss, instead of gain. O that ye were persuaded to look and search the Scriptures! Think ye to have eternal life out of them?—and think ye to have eternal life by them, who do not labour to know the way of it set down there? Every one of you hath a different model of religion, according to your fancies and breeding, according as your lusts will suffer you. The rule that the most part walk by is the course and example of the world. Is not this darkness, and gross darkness? Others model their duties according to their ability. They will do all they can do with ease, and without troubling themselves, and they think God may be well pleased with that. I pray you consider and hear the word of the Lord, and law of your God. Hath he set down here the rule and perfect pattern of true religion, and will ye never so much own it, as to examine yours according to it? The Scriptures are the touch-stone; if you would not have a counterfeit

religion deceiving you in the end, when ye have trusted to it, I pray you try it by the word of God. Oh! that this principle we reonce sunk into your hearts,—I may not walk at random; if I please myself, and satisfy my own will; if that be not also God's will, I shall have neither gain nor comfort of it. His will is manifested in his word.—I will search and find what God hath required of me; for if I be not certain of his will, I may be a-doing all my days, and sweating out my life, and yet lose my pains and oil. I say, this word of the Lord that Isaiah calls to the people to hear, ver. 10, will at length judge you. Your religion will be tried in the day of accounts according to it, not according to your rules and methods ye have prescribed unto yourselves. Now, if ye in the meantime shall judge yourselves according to another rule, and absolve yourselves, and in the end God shall judge you according to this word, and condemn you, were ye not fools in neglecting this word?

The whole will of God concerning your duty may be summed up in two; John hath one of them, 1 John iii. 23, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment;" and Paul hath another to the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. iv. 3, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." And these two make up this text, so that it unites both gospel and law. The commandment of the law comes forth, and it is found that we have broken and are guilty, that we cannot answer for one of a thousand. The law entering makes sin abound. Our inability, yea, impossibility of obedience is more discovered. Well, then, the gospel proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ for the Saviour of sinners, and commands us, under pain of damnation, to believe in him, to cast our souls in him, as one able to save, as one who hath obeyed the law for us; so that this command of believing in Christ is answerable to all the breaches of the law, and tends to make them up in Christ. When he proclaimed the law on mount Sinai, with terror, that which ye hear expressed is not his first commandment, which ye are in the first in-

stance to obey, for all these we have broken; but it hath a gospel command in its bosom, it leads to Jesus Christ; and if ye could read the mind of God in it, ye would resolve all these commands which condemn you and curse you, into one command of believing in the Son, that ye may be saved from that condemnation. And if ye obey this command, which is his last command, and most peremptory, then are the breaches of all the rest made up, the intent of all the rest is fulfilled, though not in your obedience, yet in Christ's, which is better than yours. Believing in Christ presents God with a perfect righteousness, with an obedience even to the death of the cross. When a sinner hears the holy and spiritual sense of the law, and sees it in the light of God's holiness, O how vile must he appear to himself, and how must he abhor himself! What original pollution, what actual pollution, what a fountain within, what uncleanness in streams without, will discover itself! Now, when the most part of men get any sight of this, presently they fall a-washing and cleansing themselves, or hiding their filthiness. And what water take they?—their own tears or sorrows, their own resolutions, their own reformations. But alas, we are still more plunged in our own filthiness; that is still marked before him, because all that is as foul as that we would have washen away. What garment do men take to hide themselves ordinarily? Is it not their own righteousness? Is it not a shirt of some duty that is spread over transgressions? Do not men think their sins hid, if they can mourn and pray for a time? Their consciences are eased by reflection upon this. But alas, thine iniquity is still marked! shall filthiness hide filthiness? "Thy righteousness is as a vile garment, is as a menstruous cloth," Isa. lxiv. 6, as well as thine unrighteousness; how then shall it cover thy nakedness? Seeing it is so then, what is the Lord's mind concerning our cleansing? Seeing stretched out hands, and many prayers will not do it, what shall I do? The Lord hath shewed thee what thou shalt do, and that is, that thou do nothing in relation to that end, that thou shouldst

undertake to wash away the least spot by all thy repentance. Yet must thou wash and make clean, and the water is brought new unto you, even "the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin." Wash in this blood, and ye shall be clean. And what is it to wash in this blood? It is to believe in Christ Jesus, to lay hold on the all-sufficient virtue of it, to trust our souls to it, as a sufficient ransom for all our sins; to spread the covering of Christ's righteousness over all our righteousness and unrighteousness, as having both alike need to be hid from his holy eyes. Jesus Christ "came by water and by blood," 1 John v. 6—by water to sanctify, and by blood to justify; by the power and cleansing virtue of the Holy Ghost to take away sin in the being of it, and by the virtue of his blood to take away sin in the guilt and condemnation of it.

Now, I conceive he presses a twofold exercise upon them in this washing, and both have relation to the blood of Jesus Christ, to wit, repentance and faith. If they be not all one, yet they are one in this point, inseparably conjoined. Repentance waters and saps the roots of believing, which otherwise would dry up; therefore, instead of outward forms and ceremonies of religion, he presseth them to inward sorrow and contrition of heart for sin, that they might present an acceptable sacrifice to God, "a contrite heart." This is more pleasing than many specious duties of men without, Psal. i. 7, &c. But when I press upon you repentance, do not conceive that we would have it preparatory to faith, that ye should sit down and mourn for your sins for a time, till your hearts be so far humbled, and then ye might come as prepared and fitted to Jesus Christ. This is the mistake of many Christians, which keeps them from solid settling. We find it ordinary, souls making scruples and objections against coming to Jesus Christ, because of want of such preparations, of measures of humiliation and contrition, which they prescribe to themselves, or do behold in others. And so they sit down and apply themselves to such a work, apply their consciences to the law and curse; and they find, instead of

softening hardness, instead of contrition of spirit, more dulness and security; at least they cannot get satisfaction to themselves in that they seek, and thus they hang their head over their impenitent hearts, and lament, not so much that repentance is not, as that they cannot find it in themselves. Alas, there are many diseases in this one malady. If it were embowelled unto you, ye would not believe that such a way were so contradictory to the gospel. For, first, ye who are so, have this principle in your hearts, which is the foundation of it: I cannot come to Christ so unclean, I must be a little washen ere I come, the most gross uncleanness and hardness of my heart must be taken away, and so I shall be accepted. Alas, what derogation is this to the blessed Saviour? What absurdity is it? I am too unclean to come to the fountain, I must be a little purged before I come to this fountain that cleanseth from all sin. I pray you, why was the fountain opened? Was it not for sin and uncleanness? And this thou sayest by interpretation, if I were so and so humbled, then I might come, and be worthy to come; when the want of such a measure debars thee as unworthy, doth not the having of it in thy estimation make thee worthy? And so ye come with a present in your hand to Jesus Christ, with a price and reward to him who gives freely. Again, thou deniest Christ to be the only fountain of all grace, and so it is most dishonourable to him. If thou wouldst have repentance before thou come to him, where shalt thou have it? Wilt thou find it in thy heart, which is desperately wicked? Wilt thou seek it of God, and not seek it in the mediator Jesus Christ? God out of a mediator will not hear thee. In a word, there is both extreme sin, and extreme folly in this way: great sin, because it contradicts the tenor of the gospel, it dishonours the Lord Jesus, the exalted prince, as if he were not the fountain of all grace; it is contrary both to the freedom of his grace, and to the fulness of it also. It is great folly, for thou leavest the living fountain, and goest seeking water in a wilderness; thou leavest the

garden where all herbs grow, and wanderest abroad to the wild mountains; and because thou canst not find what thou seekest, thou sittest down and weepest beside it. Repentance is in Christ, and no repentance so pleasing to God as the mournings and relentings of a pardoned sinner; but thou seekest it far from him, yea, refusest him for want of that which thou mayest have by choosing him. Therefore we declare this unto you, that whatever ye be, whatever ye want, if ye think ye stand in need of Jesus Christ, embrace him. If ye be exceeding vile in your own eyes, and cannot get repentance as ye would to cleanse yourselves, here is the fountain opened, and ready to wash in. Yet this we must tell you, that no sinner can believe but he that repents, not because repentance is required as a preparation to give a man a warrant and right to believe,—I know no ground of faith but our necessity, and the Lord's promise and command unto us, —but because no soul can truly fly into Jesus Christ to escape sin's guilt, but he that desires to be delivered from sin itself; and therefore the most part of you fancy a faith which you have not, because there is no possibility that men will come out of themselves, till they be pressed out by discovered sin and misery within. Your woulds and wishes after Christ and salvation, that many of you have, are not the real exercises of your soul's flying unto him for salvation. If ye did indeed turn into Jesus Christ, your hearts would turn the back upon sin, and these sins ye seek remission of. Now, all the desire that many men have of Christ, is this,—I would fain have his salvation, if I might keep my sin; I would gladly be delivered from the guilt of sin, if he would let me keep still the sin. But will Christ make any such bargain?

If this blood only wash from sin, O how many lie in their sins, and wallow in their filthiness! "There is a generation clean in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness," Prov. xxx. 12. O that ye believed this! If ye be not now washed, eternity shall find you unclean, and woe to the soul that enters eternity

with all the pollution of its sins: can such a soul enter into the high and holy place, the clean city? No, certainly; it must be without among the dogs and swine, it must be kept in darkness for ever. It is then of great importance, that ye be washen from your filthiness. Now, I ask you, is it so or not? Are ye made clean and washen from the guilt of your sins? Every one of you almost will say so, and think so; and yet says the Scripture, "there is a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed." Is there a generation such? Is there any such? Oh! then, think it is possible you may be mistaken in the opinion of your own cleanness. Do any conceive themselves pardoned, and yet are not so? Think it is possible you may have deceived yourselves, especially since ye have never examined it. But are there so many so, a whole generation—the most part of men; then, as you love your souls, try; for it is certain that the most part of you must be deceived. Is there a generation in the visible church not washen, and yet every one thinks himself clean?—then certainly the most part are in a great delusion. Will ye then once examine whether or not ye be deluded with them? It shall be your peace to know it, while it may be amended. But how comes it to pass, that so many hearing of the gospel, and lying near this fountain, are not cleansed? I think certainly, because they will not have a thorough cleansing, they get none at all. All men would love Christ's blood well to pardon sin, but who will accept of the water to sanctify them from sin? But Christ came with both. Shall this blood be spent upon numbers of you, who have no respect to it, but would still wallow in your filthiness? Would ye have God pardoning these things ye never thoroughly resolve to quit? But how is it that so many men are clean in their own eyes, and yet not washed? I think indeed, the reason of it is, they make a kind of washing, which they apprehend sufficient, and yet know not the true fountain. We find men taking much soap and nitre, when convinced of sin, or charged with it, and thereupon soon absolving themselves. If ye

ask their grounds, they will tell you, they repent and are sorry for it; they purpose to make amends, and they think amendment a good compensation for the past wrong. They will, it may be, vow to drink no more for a year after they have been drunk; they will confess their sin in public, and all this they do without having any thought of Jesus Christ, or the end of his coming, and can absolve themselves from such grounds, though in the mean time Christ come not so much as in their mind; and therefore are they not really washed. All thy righteousness is unclean before God, and thy repentances defile thee; and yet because of some such duties, thou deceivest thyself, and art clean in thine own eyes. These have some beauty in thy eyes, and thou puttest them between thy filthiness and thy eye, and so conceivest that thou art clean. I think a reason also, why many men are clean in their own eyes, and conceive that God hath pardoned their sins, is because they have forgotten it. It is not recent in their memory, and makes no present wound in their conscience; and therefore, they apprehend God such as themselves,—they think he hath forgotten it also. But oh! how terrible shall it be, when God brings to remembrance, and sets our sins in order before us. Ye think God cares not for your sins, that he forgives them, because he is silent at them, Psal. l. 21. But the Lord shall one day set them before thee, and thou shalt know they were still marked before him.

Ye who have washen in this blood, ye may rejoice, for it shall make you clean every whit. Your iniquities that so defiled you, shall not be found. O the precious virtue of that blood that can purge away a soul's spots! all the art of men and angels could not reach this. This redemption and cleansing was precious, and would have ceased for ever; but this blood is the ransom, this blood cleanseth, and so perfectly, that it shall not appear, not only to men's eyes, but also God's piercing eye. Sinners, quit your own righteousness—why defile ye yourselves more? When your eyes are opened, ye will find it so.

Here is washing; apply yourselves to this fountain; and if ye do indeed so; if ye expect cleansing from Jesus Christ, I pray you return not to the puddle. Ye are not washen from sin, to sin more, and defile yourselves more; if ye think ye have liberty to do so, ye have no part in this blood.

XI.

Isa. i. 16.—Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, &c.

THERE are two evils in sin,—one is the nature of it, another the fruit and sad effect of it. In itself it is filthiness, and contrary to God's holiness; an abasing of the immortal soul; a spot in the face of the Lord of the creatures, that hath far debased him under them all. Though it be so unnatural to us, yet it is now in our fallen estate become, as it were, natural, so that men agree with it, as if it were sunk and drunk into the very soul of man. The other is the guilt and desert of punishment and obligation to it. All men hate this, but they cannot hold it off. They eat the tree and fruit of death, they must eat death also: they must have the wages of sin, who have wrought for it. Now, the gospel hath found a remedy for lost man in Jesus Christ; he comes in the gospel with a twofold blessing, a twofold virtue, a pardoning virtue and a sanctifying virtue, "water and blood," 1 John v. 6. He comes to forgive sin, and to subdue sin; to remove the guilt of it, and then thyself of it. God's appointment had inseparably joined them; and "Christ came not to dissolve the law, but to establish it." If he had taken away the punishment, and left the sin in its being, he had weakened the law and the prophets. That conjunction of sin and wrath, which is both by divine appointment, and suitable also unto their own natures, must stand, that divine justice may be entire; and therefore, he that comes

to redeem us from the curse of the law, hath also this commission, to redeem from sin and all transgressions of the law, Rom. xi. 26, and Gal. iii. 13. He that turns away the wrath of God from men, turns also ungodliness from them, which provoked his wrath; and so he is a complete redeemer, and a complete redeemer he had not been otherwise. If he had removed wrath only, and left us under the bondage of sin, it had not been half redemption; "he that commits sin, is the servant of sin." But this is perfect freedom and liberty, to be made free from sin, for it was sin that subjected us to wrath, and so was the first tyrant and the greatest. The gospel then comes with a joyful sound unto you, but many of you mistake it, and apprehend it to be a doctrine of liberty and peace, and that unto sin; but if it were so, it were no joyful sound. If there were proclaimed a liberty to all men to do as they list, no punishment, no wrath to be feared, I would think that doctrine no glad news, it were but the perpetuating of the bondage of a reasonable soul. But this is glad news,—a delivery and freedom proclaimed in the gospel; but what? Not unto sin, but from sin; and this is to be free indeed. We owe more to Jesus Christ for this, than for redemption from wrath, because sin is a greater evil than wrath; yea, wrath were not so, if sin were not. Therefore he exhorts to wash, and wash so that they may make clean. Take Jesus Christ for justification and sanctification,—employ both the water and the blood that he hath come with. But because all men pretend a willingness to have Christ their Saviour, and their sins pardoned through his blood, who, notwithstanding, hate to be reformed, and would seek no more of Christ: therefore, he branches out that part of the exhortation in several particulars. All men have a general liking of remission of sins, but renouncing of it is to many a hard doctrine. They would be glad that God put their evils out of his sight, by passing them by, and forgetting them; but they will not be at the pains of putting away their evils from his sight; and therefore, the gospel, which

comprehends these two united, is not really received by many, who pretend to be followers of it. "This is his command, that ye believe." Some pretend to obey this, and yet have no regard of that other part of his will, even their sanctification; and therefore their faith is dead, it is a fancy. If ye did indeed believe and receive Christ for pardon of sin, it were not possible but your souls would be engaged and constrained to endeavour to walk in all well-pleasing. But it is an evident token of one that is not washed from his sin, and believes not in Christ, if he conceive within his heart a greater latitude and liberty to walk after the flesh, and be emboldened to continue in sin, because of his grace and mercy; and yet such are the most part of you. Upon what ground do you delay repentance? Upon what presumption do ye continue in your sins, and put over the serious study of holiness, till a more fit time? Is it not from an apprehension of the grace and mercy of God, that ye think ye may return any time and be accepted, and so ye may in the mean time take as much pleasure in sin as ye can, seeing ye may get leave also for God's mercy. I pray you consider, that you have never apprehended God's mercy aright, ye are yet in your sins, and certainly as yet are not washed from them.

"Put away the evil," &c. When the Spirit convinces a soul, he convinces a man not only of evil doings but of the evil of his doings; not only of sin, but of the sinfulness of sin; and not only of those actions which are in themselves sinful, but also of the iniquity of holy things. I think no man will come to wash in Christ's blood, till this be discovered. If he see much wickedness, many evil doings, yet he will labour to wash away these by his own tears, and repentance, and well-doing. As long as he hath any good actions, as prayers, fasting, and such like, he will cover his evil-doings by them; he will spread the skirts of such righteousness over his uncleanness; and when he hath hid it from his own eyes, he apprehends that he had hid it from God's also. He will wash his

bloody hands with many prayers, and thinks they may be clean enough. We see blasphemers of God's name use to join a prayer for forgiveness with their oath and curse, and they never trouble themselves more. O what mocking of God is this! Now, as long as it is thus, there is no employment for the Son of God's blood; they can do their own turn. Men will not come to Christ, because it is the best way, if they see any else beside. None will come till he see it is the only way; none can wash in Christ, except they wash all. If ye have any thing that needs not washing, his blood is not for you; his righteousness is not known, when ye establish all, or a part of your own. I fear the most part of you have no employment for Christ; ye have extreme need of him, but ye know it not, for there are many things which ye will not number among your sins,—your prayers, your hearing, reading, singing, public and private worship, giving alms, &c. How many of you were never convinced of any sin in these! Do ye not conceive God is well pleased with you for them? Your conscience hath convinced you, it may be, of gross sins, as drunkenness, filthiness, swearing, &c. But ye are not convinced for your well-doing; ye find not a necessity of a Mediator for these. I think many of you never confessed any such thing, except in a general notion. Alas, how ignorant are men of themselves! We are unclean; how can any thing we do cleanse us? Are not we unclean; and do not our hands touch our own works? Shall not then our own uncleanness defile our good actions, more than they can cleanse us? Hag. ii. 13. The ignorance of this makes men go about to build up their old ruined righteousness, and still seek something in themselves, to make up wants in themselves. Always, [*i.e.* nevertheless] when the light of God hath discovered you to yourselves, so that ye can turn your eye nowhere, but uncleanness fills it; though your conversation be blameless in the world, so as men can challenge nothing, yet ye have found within and without, nothing but matter of mourning; I say, this is an evidence

that the Spirit hath shined and enlightened thy darkness. Now, when thou hast fled unto Jesus Christ for a covering to thy righteousness, as well as unrighteousness, it remains that thou now "put away the evil of thy doings;"—put not away thy doings, but the evil of them. We challenge your prayers, services, and public duties, even as the prophet did; we declare unto you that God is as ill pleased with them, as your drunkenness, whoring, intemperance, &c. The most part of you are no more acceptable when ye come to the church, than when ye go to the tavern,—your praying and cursing is almost all one. What shall we do then, say ye? Shall we pray no more, and hear no more? No, say I, put not away your prayers and ordinances, "but put away the evil of them from before his sight." Rather multiply your doings, but destroy the evil and iniquity of your doings. And there is one evil or two above all, that makes them hateful to him: ye trust too much in them. Here is the iniquity, "the idol of jealousy set up:" ye make your doings your righteousness, and in that notion they are abomination. There is nothing makes your worship of God so hateful as this; ye think so much of it, and justify yourself by it; and then God knows what it is, that ye so magnify, and make the ground of your claim to salvation. It is even an empty ceremony, a shadow without substance, a body without a soul. You speak and look and hear, you exercise some outward senses but no inward affections; and what should that be to him, who is a Spirit?

They did not observe the iniquity of their holy things; and therefore are they marked by him,—"they are in his sight." They did not see so many faults in their prayers and services; they wondered why God did chide them so much; but God marks what we miss, he remembers when we forget. We cover ourselves with a vail of external duties, and think to hide all the rottenness of our hearts, but it will not be hid from him, before whom hell hath no covering. "All hearts are open and naked before him." Your secret sins are in the light of his countenance. Men

hear you pray, see you present at worship, they know no more, at least they see no more: nay, but the formality of thy worship, the wanderings of thy mind are in his sight. And, O how excellent a rule of walking were this, to do all in his sight and presence! O that ye were persuaded in your hearts of his all-seeing, all-searching eye, and all-knowing mind! Would ye not be more solicitous and anxious anent the frame of your hearts, than the liberty of your speech or external gesture? O how would men retire within themselves, to fashion their spirits before this all-searching, and all-knowing Spirit! If ye do not observe the evils of your hearts and ways, they are in his sight, and this will spoil all acceptance of the good of them. If ye observe the evils of your well-doing, and bring these also to the fountain to wash them, and be about this earnest endeavour of perfecting holiness, of perfecting well-doings in the power and fear of God; then certainly he will not set your sins in the light of his countenance, the good of your way shall come before him, and the evil of it Christ shall take away.

"Cease to do evil," &c. These are the two legs a Christian walks on; if he want any of them, he is lame and cannot go equally,—ceasing from evil, and doing good; nay, they are so united, that the one cannot subsist without the other. If a man do not cease from evil and his former lusts, he cannot do well, or perfect holiness. There are many different dispositions and conditions of men; there are generally one of two. Some have a kind of abstinence from many gross sins, and are called civil honest men,—they can abide an inquest and censure of all their neighbours, they can say no ill of them. But alas, there is as little good to be said: he drinks not, swears not, whores not, steals not. Nay, but what doth he well? Alas, the world cannot tell what he doth, for he prays not in secret, nor in his family,—he is void of some offences towards men; but there are many duties called to, towards both God and men, he is a stranger to. He oppresses not the poor; nay, but he is not charitable

either to give to them; he defrauds no man, but whom helps he by his means? Again, there are others, they will boast of some things done; they pray, they keep the church well, they do many good turns, and yet for all that, they do not cease to do evil. They were drunkards, so they are: they can swear for all their prayers, are given to contention, to lying, to filthiness, &c. Now, I say, neither of these religions is pure and undefiled. Religion is a thorough and entire change; it is like a new creation, that must destroy the first subject, to get place for that which is to come. It is a putting off old garments, to put on new; the putting off an old form and engraven image, to make place for a new engraving. Men do not put a seal above a seal, but deface the old, and so put on the new; men do not put new clothes upon the old, but put the old off, and so they have place for the new. Religion must have a naked man. Godliness is a new suit, that will not go on upon so many lusts; no, no, it is more meet and more conformed unto the inwards of the soul than so. The cold must go out as the heat comes in. Many men do not change their garments, but mend them, put some new pieces unto them. They retain their old lusts, their heart idols, and they will add unto these a patch of some external obedience; but alas, is this godliness? Hypocrisy will be content of a mixture,—sin is the harlot, whose heart could endure to see the child parted. It can give God a part, to get leave to brook the most part; sin will give God liberty to take some of the outward man, if it keep the heart and soul. But God will not reckon on these terms, he will have all the man or nothing, for he is the righteous owner. True godliness cannot mix so, but false and counterfeit may do it well. Other men, again, possibly unclothe themselves of some practices, but they put on new clothing; they reform some passages for fear of censure, or shame, or such like. They are found, it may be, blameless, either because so educated, or their disposition is against particular gross sins; but they are not clothed upon with holiness and well-doing, and so

they are but naked and bare in God's sight, not beautiful. They have swept their house, and some devil put out or kept out; but because the good Spirit enters not, ordinarily seven worse enter again into such men.

There is a great moment of persuasion in this order of the exhortation, "Wash you," and then, "put away the evil of your doings, and cease to do evil." Do not continue in your former customs. It is strange, how contrary our hearts are to God; we use to turn grace unto wantonness; we use to take more liberty to sin, when we conceive we are pardoned. But I do not know any more strong and constraining persuasion to forsake sin, than the consideration of the forgiving of it might yield. O what an inducement and grand argument to renouncing of evils, is the consideration of the remission of them! This is even that ye are now called unto, who have fled to Jesus to escape wrath: what should ye be taken up with, in all the world, but this—to live to him henceforth, who died for us? To forsake our own old way, and that from the constraining principle of love to him, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. O that ye would enforce your own hearts with such a thought, when there are any solicitations to sin, to former lusts! Should I, that am dead to sin, live any longer therein? Rom. vi. Should I, who am washed from such pollutions, return again to the pollutions of the world? Should I again defile myself, who am cleansed by so precious blood, and forget him that washed me? "Should I return with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow to the puddle?" God forbid. I pray you consider. If you be Christians indeed, give a proof of it. What hath Jesus Christ done for you? He hath given himself, his own precious blood, a ransom for us, will ye not give up yourselves to him? Will not ye give him your sins and lusts, which are not yourself, but enemies to yourself? Will not ye put away these ills, that he came into this world to destroy? Art thou a Christian, and are there yet so many sins, and works of the devil reigning in thee, and set up in God's sight? What an

inconsistency is this! If thou be his follower, thou must put these away. Give them a bill of divorcement, never to turn again. Many a man parts with his sin, because it leaves him, he puts it not away; temptation goes, and occasion goes away, but the root of it abides within him. Many men have particular jars with their corruptions, but they reconcile again, as differences between married persons; they do not arise to hate their sin in its sinful nature. But if thou hate it, then put it away. And who would not hate it, that Christ so hated, that he came to destroy it? 1 John iii. 5. What a great indignity must it be to the gospel, to make that the ground of living in sin, which is pressed in it, as the grand persuasion to forsake it? Seeing we are washed from the guilt of it, O let us not love to keep the stain and filth of it! Why are we washen? Was it not Christ's great intendment and purpose, to purify to himself a holy people? We are washen from the guilt of our sins, and is it to defile again? Is it not rather "to keep ourselves henceforth clean, that we may be presented holy and unblameable in his sight?" that we may seek to be as like heaven as may be. But who ceases to do these evils, that he says are pardoned? Who puts away the evil of these doings, the guilt whereof he thinks God hath put away? Could ye find in your hearts to entertain those evils so familiarly, to pour out your souls unto them, if that peace of God were indeed spoken unto you? Would not the reflex of his love prove more constraining on your hearts? Were it possible, that if ye did indeed consider, that your lusts cost Christ a dear price to shed his blood, that your pleasures made his soul heavy to death, and that he hath laid down his life to ransom you from hell; were it possible, I say, that ye would live still in these lusts, and choose these pleasures of sin, which were so bitter to our Lord Jesus? I beseech you be not deceived,—if ye love the puddle still, that ye cannot live out of it, do not say that ye are washed. Ye may have washen yourselves with soap and nitre, but the blood of Christ hath not cleansed: for, if that blood sprinkled your conscience once, to give you

an answer to all challenges, it could not but send forth streams to purify the heart, and so the whole man. The blood and water might be joined, the justifying Saviour, and the sanctifying Spirit; for both these are in this gospel washing, 1 Cor. vi. 11; 1 John v. 6. "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." Not by water only, but by blood also, and I say, not by blood only, but by water also. The very purpose of forgiveness is not to lay a foundation for more sin, but that men may sin no more, but break off their sins. It is indeed impossible for a man to amend his ways, till he be pardoned, for his sin stands betwixt him and God. God is a consuming fire—the guilt of it hinders all meeting of the soul with God, at least all influence from him. But when an open door is made in Christ, that men may come and treat with God, notwithstanding of rebellions, and have the curse relaxed, O how may he go about his duty comfortably! Am I escaped from hell, why should I any more walk in the way to it? And now he hath the Spirit given for the asking. There are some cessations from sin, that are not real forsakings of it, and ceasings from it. You know men will abstain from eating for a season, that they may be made ripe for it another time. Some do not cease from sin, but delay it only; they put it not away, but put it off only for another time, till a fitter occasion and opportunity. And this is so far from ceasing from it, that it is rather a deliberate choice of it, and election of conveniency for it. There may be some pure and simple ceasings from sin, mere abstinence, or rather mere absence of sin for a season, that is not ceasing from doing evil. The Christian's ceasing hath much action in it. It is such a ceasing from doing evil, that it is a putting away of evil; it hath a soul and spirit joined in that cessation. Sin requires violence to put it out where it hath haunted,—it is an intruding guest, and an usurping guest. It comes in first as a supplicant and beggar, prays for a little lodging for a night, and promises to be gone. The temptation speaks but for a

little time, even the present time, for a little one,—it seeks but little at first, lest it be denied; but if once it be received into the soul, it presently becomes master, and can command its own time, and its abode. Then ye will not so easily put it out as ye could hold it out, for it is now joined with that wicked, desperate party within you, the heart, and these united forces are too strong for you. According as a lust is one with a man's heart, or hath nearer connection with his heart and soul, it is the worse to put away: for, will ye drive a man from himself?—it is the cutting off a right hand, or plucking out of a right eye. To make a man cease from such evils, requires that a stronger power be within him than is in the world. Men may cease for a time, for want of occasions or temptations to sin; when there is no active principle in them, restraining or keeping their soul from such sins as appear after, then no sooner occasion is offered, but they run as the horse to his course, or the stone falleth downward,—they conceive fire as easily as dry stubble. That is not Christian ceasing, which is that which the soul argues itself to, from grounds of the gospel. Should I, who am dead to sin, live any longer therein? This is a principle of cessation, and this is true liberty,—when the soul can abstain from present temptations upon such grounds and persuasions of the gospel; then it is really above itself and above the world, then hath it that true victory. Many men cease only from sin, because sin ceases from them; they have not left it, but it hath left them. The old man thinks himself a changed man, because he wallows not in the lusts of the flesh, as in his youth. But, alas! no thanks to him for that, he hath not ceased from his lusts. But temptations to him, or power and ability in him to follow them hath ceased,—there is no change in his spirit within, for he can talk of his former sins with pleasure, he continues in other evils as bad, but more suitable to his age. In a word, he is so inwardly, that if he were in his body, and occasions offering as before, he would be just the same. Some, again, cease from some evils, from some principles, but, alas! they are no Christ-

ian principles. What restrains the multitude of civilians from gross scandals? Is it any thing but affectation of a good name and report in the world? Is it not fear of reproach or censure? Is it not because possibly they have no particular inclination to such evils? And yet there are many other evils of the heart as evil though more subtile, that they please themselves in, as pride, covetousness, malice, envy, ambition, &c. What shall all your abstinence be accounted of, when it is not love to Jesus Christ, or hatred of sin, that principles it? It is not the outward abstinence that will commend you: such it is, as the principles of it are. And these only are the true Christian principles of mortification,—love of Jesus Christ, "which constrains men to live no more to themselves," but to be new creatures, 1 Cor. v. 14, 15; and hatred of sin in its nature as sin: a Christian should have a mortal hatred at it, as his mortal enemy. It is not Christianity to abstain from some fleshly lusts, if ye consider them not as your soul's enemies, 1 Peter ii. 11. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil," Psal. xcvii. 10. These are chained together. David's hatred was a soul-hatred, an abhorrency, Psal. cxix. 163, "I hate and abhor lying." It is like the natural antipathies that are among creatures: the soul not only hates the person of it, but the nature of it also. Men often hate sin, only as it is circumstantiate; but Christian hatred is a hatred of the nature, like the deadly feuds, which are enmities against the kind and name. "I will put enmity between thy seed," &c. "It is a perfect hatred," Psal. cxxxix. 22. And so it cannot endure any sin because all is contrary to God's holiness, and offensive to his Spirit. I would think it easier to forsake all evil, and cease from doing any evil, I mean, presumptuously, with a willing mind and endeavour, than indeed to forsake one; for as long as ye entertain so many lusts like it, they shall make way for it. It were easier to keep the whole commandments in an evangelical sense, than indeed to keep any one, for all of them help another, and subsist they cannot one without another, so that ye take a foolish course,

who go about particular reformations. Ye scandalous sinners profess that ye will amend the particular fault ye are guilty of, and, in the mean time, you take no heed to your souls and lives; therefore it shall be either in vain, or not acceptable. How pleasant a life would Christians have, if they would indeed be persuaded to be altogether Christians. The halving of it neither pleaseth God nor delights you; it keeps you but in continual torment between God and Baal. Your own lusts usurp over you, and that of Christ in you challenges the supremacy; so ye are as men under two masters, each striving for the place, and were it not better to be under one settled government? If there be any tenderness of God in your hearts, or light in your consciences, they cannot but testify against your lusts, these strange lords. Your lusts, again, they drive you on against your conscience; thus ye are divided and tormented betwixt two,—your own conscience and affections. You have thus the pain of religion, and know not the true pleasure of it. You are marred in the pleasures of sin, conscience and the love of God is a worm to eat that gourd, it is gall and vinegar mixed in with them. Were it not more wisdom to be either one thing or another? If ye will have the pleasures of sin for a season, take them wholly, and renounce God, and see if your heart can endure that. If your heart cannot condescend to that, I pray you renounce them wholly, and ye shall find more exquisite and sure pleasures in godliness, at his right hand. O what a noble entertainment hath the soul in God; the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost is a kingdom indeed!

XII.

Isa. xxvi. 3.—Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.

All men love to have privileges above others. Every one is upon the design and search after some well-being, since Adam lost that which was true happiness. We all

agree upon the general notion of it, but presently men divide in the following of the particular. Here all men are united in seeking after some good; something to satisfy their souls, and satiate their desires. Nay, but they scatter presently in the prosecution of it, because, according to every man's fancy and corrupt humour, they attribute that good unto diverse things; and when they meet with disappointment, they change their opinion of that, but are made no wiser, for they turn from one to another of that same kind, in which their imagination hath supposed blessedness to be; and therefore they will return to that which they first loathed and rejected. Is there, then, no such thing in the world as blessedness? Is it not to be found among men? Are all men's insatiable desires in vain? Is a creature made up and composed of desires, to keep it in continual torment and vexation of spirit? No, certainly, it is found by some. All the world strive about it, but the man only who trusts and believes in God, he it is who carries it away from them, —who hath this privilege beyond the world. And why do so many miss it? Because they do not see or suspect that it is blessedness indeed which he enjoys; but, on the contrary, their corrupted imaginations represent godliness, and a godly man's self-indigency and dependence on God, as the greatest misery and shame. The godly man hides not his blessedness from the world; no, he proclaims it when he hath found it,—he would that all enjoyed it with him. And if there were no more to declare, that it doth not consist in worldly things, this might suffice—they are not communicable to many, without the prejudice and loss of every one. But none will believe his report of his own estate.

If ye would consider, here is that which men toil for, —compass sea and land for; here it is; "near thee in thy mouth." It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, "How shall I ascend to it?" It is not in hell below, that thou shouldst say, "Who shall descend?" Is it not in the ends of the earth? No, "It is near thee, in thy

mouth." It is not beyond the sea, "but it is near in thy mouth, even the word of faith," which Christ preached, Rom. x. 6—8. And what says that word? "Believe with thy heart, and thou shalt be saved; trust in God, and depend on him, and ye shall have peace," and that perfect peace; and this peace shall be kept by God himself. "Blessed, then, is the man that trusts in the Lord," Psal. xl. 4. Ye make a long journey in vain; ye spend your labour and money in vain; all the pains might be saved: it is not where ye seek it. Ye travel about many creatures; ye go to many doors, and enquire for happiness and peace, but ye go too far off; ye need not search so many coasts, it is nearer hand, in this word of the gospel—the joyful sound; it is this that proclaims peace. Peace is a comprehensive word, especially in Scripture. It was the Jews' salutation, "Peace be to you;" meaning happiness and all good things; it is Christ's salutation, "Grace and peace." Grace is holiness, peace is happiness, and these are either one, or inseparably conjoined as one. This was the angels' song, "glory to God, peace on earth," Luke ii. 14. Blessedness was restored, or brought near to be restored, to miserable man, by Jesus Christ; and upon the apprehension of this, angels sing. It was this Christ came into the world with; and when he went away, he left this legacy to his children, "My peace I leave you," John xiv. 27. We lost happiness, and all men are on a vain pursuit of it since, but it is found, and found by one of our kin. Our Lord Jesus, our elder brother, he hath found it, or made it, and brought it near us in the gospel for the receiving; and whoso receives him by faith, and trusting in him, receives that privilege, that peace. He endured much trouble to gain our peace; he behoved to undergo misery to purchase our blessedness, and so it is his own, and whoso receives him receives it also.

The news of such a peace might be seasonable in the time of war and trouble, if we apprehended our need of it. It is not a peace from war and trouble, but a peace in war and trouble. "My peace I leave with you, and

in the world ye shall have trouble," John xiv. 27, and xvi. at the end. What a blessed message is it, that there is a peace, and a perfect peace attainable in the midst of wars, confusions, and calamities of the times, public and personal; a perfect peace, a complete peace, even complete without the accession of outward and worldly peace, that needs it not; nay, appears most perfect and entire in itself, when it is stripped naked of them all. Behold what a privilege the gospel offers unto you! ye need not be made miserable, but if you please. This is more than all the world can afford you. There is no man can promise to himself immunity from public or personal daugers, from many griefs and disappointments; but the gospel bids you reckon up all your troubles and miseries that ye can meet with in the world; and yet in such a case, if ye hearken to wisdom, there is a peace that will make you forget that trouble—"her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," Prov. iii. 17. I will undertake to make thee blessed, says wisdom, the Father's wisdom. When all the world hath given thee over for miserable; when thou hast spent thy substance on the physicians, and in vain, come to me, I can heal that desperate disease by a word. "I create peace," when natural causes have given it over; I create it of nothing; "I will keep you in perfect peace."

You have then here, three things of special concernment in these times; and all times, a blessedness, a perfect peace attainable—the way of it, and the fountain of it. The fountain of it, the preserver of it, is "God himself;" the way to attain it, is "trusting in God, and staying on him." This sweetness of peace is in God the tree of life. Faith puts to its hand, and plucks the fruit of the tree; hope and dependence on God, is a kind of tasting of that fruit and eating of it; and then followeth this perfect peace, as the delightful relish and sweetness that the soul finds in God, upon tasting how gracious he is. God himself is "the life of our souls—the fountain of living waters—the life and light of men." Faith and trusting

in God, draws out of this fountain—out of this deep well of salvation; and staying on God, drinks of it, till the soul be refreshed with peace and tranquillity, such as passeth natural understanding. Christ Jesus is the tree of life, that grows in the garden of God; trusting in him by faith implants a soul in him—roots a soul in him, by virtue of which union, it springs up and grows into a living branch; by staying and depending upon him, we live by him, and hence springs this blessed and sweet fruit of peace of soul and conscience, which grows upon the confidence of the soul placed in God, as the stalk by which it is united to the tree. Trusting and staying upon God is the soul's casting its anchor upon him in the midst of the waves and storms of sin, wrath, and trouble. The poor beaten sinner casts an anchor within the vail, on that sure ground of immutable promises in Jesus Christ; and then it rests and quiets itself at that anchor, enjoys peace in the midst of the storm;—there is a great calm, it is not moved, or not greatly moved, as if it were a fair day. David flieth unto God as his refuge, anchors upon the name of the Lord, Psal. lxii. 1, 2; and so he enjoys a perfect calm and tranquillity. "I shall not be moved;" because he is united to the rock, he is tied to the firm foundation, Jesus Christ, and no storm can dissolve this union; not because of the strength of that rope of faith, it is but a weak cord, if omnipotency did not compass it about also; and so "we are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." The poor wearied traveller, the pilgrim, sits down under the shadow of a rock, and this peace is his rest under it. Faith lays him down, and peace is his rest and sleep. Faith in Jesus Christ is a motion towards him, as the soul's proper place and centre; and therefore it is called a coming to him—flying to him as the city of refuge. It is the soul's flight out of itself, and misery and sin within, to apprehend mercy and grace, and happiness in Christ. Now, hope is the conjunction or union of the soul with him—the soul then staying and resting on him, as in its proper place, and so

it enjoys perfect peace and rest in its place; so that if ye remove it thence, then ye offer violence to it.

These two things are of greatest importance to you to know; what this perfect peace is, and what is the way to attain it. The one is the privilege and dignity, the other is the duty of a Christian, and these two make him up what he is.

I would think that man perfectly blessed, who is at peace with two things,—God and himself. If a man be at peace with creatures without him, and be at peace with himself, but have war within his own mind, that man's peace is no peace, let be perfect peace. "A man's greatest enemy is within his own house." And within indeed, when it is in his bosom and soul: when a man's conscience is against him, it is worse than a world beside. *Conscientia mille testes*, so I say, it is *mille hostes*. It is a thousand witnesses, and a thousand enemies. It were better to endure condemnation of any judge, of many judges in the world, than to sustain the conviction of a man's own conscience: "when it accuseth, who shall excuse?" John viii. 9; Rom ii. 15. "A merry spirit," saith Solomon, "is a continual feast," Prov. xv. 15. And what must a heart be, which hath such a gnawing worm within it, as an accusing conscience, to eat it out? This is the worm of hell that dies not out, which makes hell hell indeed. This indeed will be a painful consumption, "A broken spirit drieth up the bones," it will eat up the marrow of the spirit and body," Prov. xvii. 22. What infirmity is there which a man cannot bear? Poverty, famine, war, pestilence, sickness, name what you will; but a wounded spirit who can bear? Prov. xviii. 14. And there is reason for it, for there is none to bear it: a sound and whole spirit can sustain infirmities, but when that is wounded, which should bear all the rest, what is behind to bear it? It is a burden to itself. If a man have trouble and war in this world, yet there is often escaping from it; a man may fly from his enemy, but when thy enemy is within thee, whither shalt thou fly?

Thou canst not go from thyself; thou carriest about thee thy enemy, thy tormentor.

But suppose a man were at peace within himself, and cried peace, peace, to himself; yet if he be not at peace with God, shall his peace be called peace? Shall it not rather be named supine security? If a man be at variance with himself, and his soul disquieted within, there is more fear than danger, if he be at peace with God. It is but a false alarm that shall end well; but if he have peace in his own bosom, and yet no agreement with God, then destructions are certainly coming, his dream of peace will have a terrible wakening. A man may sleep soundly, and his enemies round about him, because he knoweth not of it; but he is in a worse estate than he that is in great fear, and his enemies either none, or far distant. The one hath present danger, and no fear, the other present fear, and no danger; and which of these think ye best? Sudden destruction awakes the one from sleep, Ezek. vii. 25. Their fear and destruction come both at once, when it is now in vain to fear, because it is past hope, Prov. i. 27. Therefore the Lord swears, that "there is no peace to the wicked," Isa. xlviii. 22. What! Do not they often cry peace to themselves, and put the evil day far off? No men are so without bands in life and death as they; they have made agreement with hell and death, and their own consciences; yet for all that, "thus saith the Lord, there is no peace to the wicked." If God be against us, what is the matter who be with us; for he can make a man's friends his enemies, and he can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him: "He makes peace and creates trouble," Isa. xlv. 7. Men can but destroy the body, but he can destroy both body and soul for ever. O what a potent and everlasting enemy is he! There is no escaping from his all-seeing eye, and powerful hand, Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8. A man may fly from men, but whither shall he fly from his presence? To heaven?—He is there. To hell?—He is there. The darkness of the night hath been a covering under which many have

escaped, and been saved in armies, but darkness is no covering to him, it is all one with light. He is near hand every one of us. The conscience is within us, but he is within the conscience; and how much God is above the creature, so great and dreadful a party is he above any enemy imaginable. Therefore I conclude, that that man only hath perfect peace, who is at peace with God, and with his own conscience. If a man be at peace with God, and not with himself, he wants but a moment's time of perfect peace; for, ere it be long, the God of it will speak peace unto him. But if he be at peace with God and himself, I know not what he wants of the perfect peace, of the "peace, peace:" for it is a man's mind that makes peace or war, it is not outward things; but in the midst of peace, he may be in trouble, and in the midst of trouble in peace, according as he hath satisfaction and contentment in his own breast: for what is all the grace of a Christian? It is godliness with contentment; it is not godliness and riches, godliness and honour, or pleasure, godliness and outward peace. No, no, contentment compenseth all these, and hath in it eminently all the gain and advantage of these. A man in honour, a rich man, having no contentment in it, is really as poor, as ignominious, as the poor and despised man. If contentment then be without these things, certainly they cannot be missed; for where contentment is not with them, it only is missed, and they not considered. Contentment is all the gain that men seek in riches, and honour, and pleasure; if a godly man have that same without them, he then hath all the gain and advantage, and wants nothing, but some trouble that ordinarily attends them. Outward peace cannot add to inward peace, and so the want of it cannot diminish.

We must begin at the original, if we would know rightly this peace that passeth knowledge. The fountain-head is peace with God; a stream of this is peace of conscience, and peace with the creatures. There is a peace of friendship, when persons were never enemies, and there

is a peace of reconciliation, when parties at variance are made one. Innocent Adam had peace once with God as a friend,—angels continue so to this day; but now there is no such peace between men and God, for "all are become enemies to God, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel:" that peace was broken by rebellion against God his maker, and all the posterity are born with the same enmity against God. On our part "are hearts desperately wicked, whose imagination is only evil continually." On God's part "is holy and spotless justice, that is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and therefore must destroy it or the sinner. On our part are so many rebellions, —Adam's actual transgression, and all our own sins and breaches of the holy law, as so many breaches of peace. On God's part are so many curses answerable to the breaches of the law: "cursed is every one that abideth not in every thing," &c. This curse is even the proclamation of men to be traitors, and an intimation of the righteous judgment which will come upon them. Adam was in a covenant of peace with God,—"Do, and thou shalt live, if not, thou shalt die." Adam brake this covenant, so the peace is dissolved, and God is no more obliged to give life, but to execute the pain contained in the covenant; and in sign and token of this, look how Adam fled from God's presence, to hide himself when he heard his voice: it was a poor shift, "for whether should he go from his presence?" But, alas! seeking more wisdom, he lost that he had; seeking divine wisdom, he lost human. Now, there is no more making up this peace on such terms again; we have no capacity to treat with God any more; but blessed be his Majesty, who hath found out the way of agreement and reconciliation. O that ye were once persuaded of your enmity against God! ye are not born friends, though ye be born within the visible church. How dreadful a thing is it, to have the Most High and terrible God against you, to do to you according to your deservings! Ye all know this, we are enemies to God by nature; I pray you, is it but a name?

Is it not worthy deep consideration? But who considereth this matter? If ye lose a friend, ye will be troubled, and the more behoveful your friend was, the more troubled you will be. If a great and potent nation proclaimed war against us, we cannot but be sensible of it; but alas! who considereth the great breach that is between God and all men, occasioned by the first man's transgression and rebellion! It is one of the degrees of health, to know the disease, and I may call it a degree of peace, a kind of preparation to peace, to know the enmity, and not generally to know it, but to ponder it till the heart be affected with it; to call a council of all the faculties and affections of the soul, to consider the great imminent danger of man's commonwealth. What is it, I pray you, that is the greatest obstruction of men's making peace with God, that makes the breach irreparable, and the wound incurable? It is this, certainly; no man apprehendeth it aright: we entertain good thoughts of our friendship with God, or that it is easy to be reconciled. Who seeth such a wide breach between God and man, that all the merits of angels and men could not make it up? Who seeth the price of redemption so precious, as it must cease for ever, for all that men and angels can do? Is not every man offering God satisfaction, either his tears, or sorrow, or amendment in time coming, or all of them? Do not men undertake to pacify God with external ordinances, and think it may suffice for their sins? Certainly ye are ignorant of the infinite separation between God and man, who imagine a treaty with him yourselves, or that ever ye can come unto speaking terms; and therefore is this war and enmity perpetual; therefore there is no peace, when ye cry, Peace, peace! When ye have peace within you, and say that ye have peace with God; yet certainly, "the Lord thy God is against thee, and will not spare thee," Deut. xxix. 19. Many of you bless yourselves in your own hearts; when ye hear the curse and threatening of the law, ye say, God forbid all that were true. Well, thus saith the Lord, All these cur-

ses that are written in this book shall lie upon thee, and the Lord shall separate thee unto evil, because ye take not with your enmity; there can be no treaty, a mediator can have no employment from you.

How shall the breach of peace be made up? Since the first covenant cannot be made up again, where shall the remedy be found? God is just and righteous, men are rebellious and sinful; can these meet, and the one not be consumed? Will not God be a consuming fire, and men as stubble before the Lord's presence? Therefore, there must be a Mediator between them, a peace-maker, to make of two, one, to take up the difference. And this Mediator must be like both, and yet neither wholly the one nor the other. He must therefore be God and man, that he may be a fit day's-man betwixt God and man: and this is our Lord Jesus Christ. In his divinity he comes near to God, in his humanity he comes near to man: in his person he is between both, and he is fit to make peace; and therefore he is "a prince of peace," Isa. ix. 6. And that he may be a Prince of peace, he must be both, "an everlasting Father" like God, and a young child like unto man: God to prevail with God, and a man to engage for man; and therefore he is called "our Peace," Eph. ii. 14. Our Lord Jesus Christ enters into a covenant with the Father, wherein he undertakes to bear our curse, and the chastisement of our peace. He is content to be dealt with as the rebel, "Upon me, upon me be the iniquity;" and so there comes an interruption, as it were, of that blessed peace he had with the Father. He is content that there should be a covering of wrath spread over the Father's love, that he should handle the Son as an enemy; and therefore it is, that sinners are admitted as friends,—his obedience takes away our rebellion. The cloud of the Lord's displeasure pours down upon him, that it might be fair weather to us; the armies of curses that were against us, encounter him, and he, by being overcome, overcometh; by being slain by justice, Satan and sin, overcometh all those, "and killeth the

enmity on the cross, making peace by his blood," Col. ii. 14, 15; Eph. ii. 15. And it is this sacrifice that hath pacified heaven,—the sweet smell of it hath gone above, and made peace in the high places.

Here, then, is the privilege of a believer,—to be at peace with God, to be one with him; and this indeed is life eternal, to be united unto the fountain of life, in whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life. Is not this a blessed estate? Whatever a man hath done against God, is all forgiven and forgotten, shall never come into remembrance. Are not angels blessed who are friends with God? Such is the soul whose sins are pardoned through Christ,—their sins are as if they never had been. The soul is not only escaped that terrible wrath of God, but being at peace with God, all the goodness that is communicable to creatures, it shall partake of, "that they may be one, as we are one, that they may be perfect in one," John xvii. This Christ prayed for, and this was the end of his death,—to make of two one. So, then, the glory that Christ is partaker of with the Father, we must be partakers of with him, and all this by virtue of that peace with God by him. O if ye knew what enmity with God is! how would it endear and make precious peace with him! The one engageth all that is in God to be against a man; the other engageth all that is in him to be for a man. And is not he then a great one, whether he be a friend or an enemy; is he not the best friend and worst enemy, who hath most power, yea, all power, to employ for whom he will, and against whom he will? What a blessed change is it, to have God, of a consuming fire, made a sun, with healing and consolation! that the righteous, holy, and just God, before whom no flesh can stand, should accept so rebellious sinners, and dwell among them! He had not only power to destroy, but law against us also. What a perfect peace is it, then, that the Judge becometh a merciful Father, and the law of ordinances is cancelled, and that power employed to keep salvation to us, and us to salvation! Ye who have made peace and atonement

through Christ's blood, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; there wants nothing to make you completely blessed, but the clear and perfect sight and knowledge of your estate before God.

Now, when this peace, which is made up in heaven, is intimated unto the conscience, then all the tempests and clouds of it evanish; and this is the peace of believing, which is the soul's resting and quieting itself upon the believed favour of God. There may be a great calm above, "good-will in God towards men," and yet great tempests in this lower region, "no peace on earth." There is a peace of conscience, which is a disease of conscience, a benumbedness of conscience, or a sleep of conscience, when men walk in the imagination of their own hearts, and flatter themselves in their own eyes, will not trouble themselves with the apprehension of the wrath of God. When souls will not suffer their sin, or the curse to enter in; this is that "no peace" which the Lord speaks often of, it is but a dream; and when a man awaketh, alas! what a dreadful sight meets he with at first,—"sudden destruction!" Sin enters into the conscience, and the law, the strength of sin; and so that peace endeth in an eternal disquietness. But what is the reason, that notwithstanding of God's justice and men's sins, so many are not afraid of him, so many pass the time without fear of wrath and hell? Is it not because they have taken hold of his strength, and made peace with him? No indeed, but because they know not the power of his anger, to fear him according to his wrath. Who will spend one hour in the examination of his own ways, in searching out sins, in counting his debt, till he find it past payment? No, men entertain the thoughts of sin, and hell and wrath, as if it were coals in their bosom; they shake them out, they like and love any diversion from them. Oh! ignorance maketh much peace, I would say security, which is so much worse than fear, because it is so far from the remedy, that it knoweth not the evil and danger. It is not the rising of the Sun of righteousness, shining into the soul, that hath cleared

them, but their perpetual darkness that blindeth them. I say, then, in the name of Jesus Christ, that ye never knew the peace of God, who knew not war with God; ye know not love, who have not known anger; but this is the soul's true peace and tranquillity, when it is once awakened to see its misery and danger—how many clouds overspread it; what tempests blow; what waves of displeasure go over its head! But when that peace, which is made in the high places, breaketh through the cloud with a voice, "Son, be of good comfort, thy sins be forgiven thee!" when that voice of the Spirit is uttered, presently at its command the wind and waves obey; the soul is calmed, as the sea after a storm; it is not only untroubled, but it is peaceable upon solid grounds, because of the word which speaks peace in Christ. The peace of the most of you is such as ye were born and educated withal. It is not a created peace, a spoken peace,—the fruit of the lips, and so no true peace. Ye had not your peace from the word, but ye brought it to the word: ye have no peace after trouble, and so it is not the Lord's peace.

The Christian may have peace, in regard of his own salvation and eternal things, and in regard of all things that befalleth in time; the first is, when the conscience is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, and getteth a good answer to all the challenges and accusations of conscience, and of the law and justice, 1 Pet. iii. 21; when the Spirit of God shines into the soul, with a new light to discover these things that are freely given, 1 Cor. ii. 12. And this is the sealing of the Spirit after believing, Eph. i. 13. When a soul hath put to its seal by believing God's word, and hath acknowledged God's truth and faithfulness in his word, the Spirit sealeth mutually the believer's faith, by more holiness and the knowledge of it; and how great peace is this, when a soul can look upon all its iniquities when they compass about a man, and outward trouble sharpeneth and setteth on edge inward challenges, and yet the soul will not fear,—it hath answers to them all in Christ's blood, Psalm xlix. 5. This is a greater

word than all the world can say. Many men's fearlessness proceeded from ignorance of sin, their iniquities were never set in order before them; but if once they compassed them about, and wrath, like a fiery wall, compass them about also, so that there were no escaping, O it would be more terrible than all the armies of the world! ye would account little of a kingdom, ye would exchange it for such a word as David hath upon good grounds.

Now, I say again, the soul that hath thus committed itself to him as a faithful keeper, may have peace in all estates and conditions; and this peace floweth from that other peace. There is a peace which guards the heart and mind, Phil. iv. 6, 7, opposed to carefulness and anxiety; and this Paul is exemplary for, "I have learned in every estate, therewith to be content, to want and abound," &c. ver. 11. The soul of a believer may be in an equal even tenor and disposition in all conditions; it may possess itself in patience. Impatience and anxiety makes a man not his own man; he is not himself; he enjoys not himself; he is a burden to himself, and is his own tormentor; but if souls were stayed upon God, certainly they would possess themselves, dwell securely within their own breasts. We may find that the most part of men are exposed to all the floods and waves of the times. They move inwardly, as things are troubled outwardly; every thing addeth moment to their grief or joy; any dispensation casteth the balance, and either weighs them down with discouragement, or lifteth them up with vanity and lightness of mind; but the believer's privilege is to be unmoved in the midst of all the tossings and confusions of the times, Psal. cxxviii. 1, 2. Ye would "be as mount Zion, if ye trusted in God;" no dispensation would enter into the soul to cast the balance upon you; ye might stand upon your rock Jesus Christ, and look about the estates, persons, affairs, and minds of men, as a troubled sea, fleeting, tossed up and down, and ye stand "and not be moved, or not greatly moved," Psal. lxii. 2. And this is to be wise indeed. If I would describe a wise man, I would say, he "is

one man," beside him no man is one with himself, but various, inconstant, changeable. He is unwise who is unlike himself, who changeth persons according to dispensations: wisdom is the stability of thy times, and faith is wisdom. It establisheth as mount Zion, so as a man cometh out still one,—in prosperity not exalted, in adversity not cast down, in every estate content; and this is the man who is blessed indeed. This were wisdom,—to will the same thing, and nill the same thing. *Semper idem velle, atque idem nolle.* I need not, says Seneca, add that exception, that it be right which you desire, for no one thing can universally and always please, if it be not good and right; so I say, he were both wise and happy, who had but one grief and one joy. Should not a believer's mind be calm and serene, seeing the true light hath shined; it should be as the upper world, where no blasts, no storms or clouds are to eclipse the sun, or cloud it. While our peace and tranquillity is borrowed from outward things, certainly it must change; but a believer's peace and tranquillity of mind, having its rise from above, from the unchangeable word of the Lord, it needeth not to change according to the vicissitudes of providence. He needeth not to care before-hand, because there is one who careth for him; and what need both to care? He needeth not be disquieted or troubled after, because it shall turn about to his good; "all things shall do so," Rom. viii. 28. He needeth not be anxious about future events, because he hath all his burden cast upon another by prayer and supplication. What needeth he then take a needless burden? Prayer will do that which care pretends and cannot do, and that without trouble. He needeth not be troubled when things are present, for he cannot by his thought either add or diminish, take away or prevent. There is one good and necessary thing that his heart is upon, and that cannot be taken from him; and therefore all things else are indifferent, and of small concernment to him.

Now what wanteth such a man of perfect peace, who is reconciled to God, and at peace within himself? When

peace guardeth the heart and mind within, compasseth it as a castle or garrison, to hold out all the vain alarms of external things. May not all the world be troubled about him? What though the floods lift up their voice, if they come not into the soul? If he be one and the same in peace and trouble, prosperity and adversity, do not lament him in the one more than the other. It is the mind that maketh your condition good or bad; but yet, I say, the believer hath likewise peace with all the creatures, which the world hath not, and even in this he is a privileged man. "He is in league with the stones of the field, and in peace in his tabernacle," Job v. 23. "All things are his, because he is Christ's, and all are Christ's," who is the possessor of heaven and earth, at least the righteous heir of both, 1 Cor. iii. 21. The unbeliever hath no right to the creature; though there be a cessation for a time between them and him, yet that is no peace, for they will at length be armed against him. They are witnesses already against him, and groan to God for the corruption that man's sin hath subjected them unto. His table is, it may be, full, yet it is a snare unto him; he getteth ease and quietness outwardly: nay, but it slayeth the fool and destroyeth him. But the godly man is at peace, through Christ's blood, with all crosses and comforts; the sting and enmity of all evils is taken away by Christ. Poverty is made a friend, because Christ was poor; hunger and thirst is become a friend, because Christ was hungry and thirsty; reproach and contempt is at peace with him, because Christ was despised; afflictions and sorrows are reconciled to him, because Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; in a word, death itself is become a friend, since Christ subdued it by tasting of it. I may say, the worst things to a natural man, are become best friends to the believer; the grave keepeth his body and dust in hope. Death is a better friend than life, for it ministers an entry into glory: it is the door of eternal life; it taketh down the tabernacle of mortality, that we may be clothed upon with immortality. In sum, whatever it

be, Christ hath stamped a new quality on it; it cometh through his hand, and so, if it be not good in itself, yet it is good in the use, and in his appointment, Rom. viii. 21. If it be not good, yet it worketh together for our good; it contributeth to our good, because it is in his skilful hand, who can bring good out of evil, peace out of trouble. O that ye were persuaded to be Christians indeed, to love his law, and trust in him. Great peace have all such. This were more to you than peace in the world; your peace should be as a river, for abundance and perpetuity; no drought could dry it up; it should run in time as a large river, and when time is done, it would embosom itself in eternity, in that ocean of eternal peace and joy which the saints are drowned in above; other men's peace is but like a brook that dries up in summer.

XIII.

Isa xxvi. 3.—Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.

Christ hath left us his peace, as the great and comprehensive legacy, "My peace I leave you," John xiv. 27. And this was not peace in the world that he enjoyed, you know what his life was, a continual warfare; but a peace above the world, that passeth understanding. "In the world you shall have trouble, but in me you shall have peace," saith Christ, a peace that shall make trouble no trouble. You must lay your accounts to have such a life as the forerunner had; but withal, as he hath left us his trouble, so hath he left us his peace; the trouble will have an end, but the joy can no man take from you. We have this sure promise to rest upon, in behalf of the church, "peace shall be on Israel;" a peace that the world knoweth not, and so cannot assault it, or take it away. O that ye would hearken to this word, "that ye would trust in the Lord, and stay upon your God, then should your peace be as a river," Isa. xlviii. 18.

There is nothing more desired in time of trouble, than peace; but all peace is not better than war: some necessary war is better than evil-grounded peace. The kingdoms have been long in pain, labouring to bring forth a safe and well-grounded peace. But alas! we have been in pain and brought forth wind; when we looked for peace, no good came, and for healing, behold trouble. But how shall we arrive at our desired haven? Certainly, if peace be well-grounded, it must have truth for its foundation, and righteousness for its companion; "truth must spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven." This were the compendious way for public peace, if every man would make his own peace with God. There are controversies with God, between king, nobles, and people; and therefore God fomenteth the wars in the kingdoms. If you would have these ended, make peace with God in Christ, by flying in unto him, and resting on him; more trusting in God would dispatch our wars; trusting in the arm of flesh continueth them. Always [*i. e.* nevertheless] whatever be, peace or war, here is the business that more concerns you,—your eternal peace and safety; and, if ye were more careful of this, to save your own souls, you would help the public more. If you could be once persuaded to be Christians indeed, we needed not press many duties in reference to the public; and until you be once persuaded to save yourselves, by flying from the wrath to come, it is in vain to speak of public duties to you. We do therefore declare unto you the way of obtaining perfect peace,—peace as a river; if you will quit all self-confidences, flee from yourselves as your greatest enemies, and trust your souls unto the promise in Jesus Christ, and lean all your weight on him, we assure you, your peace shall run abundantly and perpetually. Whoever trusteth in creatures, in uncertain riches, in worldly peace, in whatsoever thing beside the only living and glorious Lord, we persuade him, that his peace shall fail as a brook. All things in this world shall deal deceitfully with you, as a brook which is blackish, by reason of ice;

what time it waxeth warm, it shall evanish. You that looked and waited for water in it, shall be confounded, because you hoped, and are ashamed because of your expectation, Job vi. 15, &c. The summer shall dry up your peace, and what will ye do? But if you pour out your souls on him, and trust in the fountain of living waters, you shall not be ashamed, for your peace shall be as a river. The elephant is said to trust that he can drink out a river; but he is deceived, for he may drink again,—it runs, and shall run for ever. If any thing would essay to take your peace from you, it is a vain attempt, for it runs like a river; it may be shallower and deeper, but it cannot run dry, because of the living fountain it proceedeth from. There is no other thing can be made sure; all besides this is uncertain, and this only is worthy to be made sure; nothing besides this can give you satisfaction.

Are your hearts asking within you, how shall this peace be attained? If you desire to know it, consider these words, "Whose heart is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." It concerneth you much to know well, what this is that your eternal peace depends on.

Trusting in God, is the leaning of the soul's weight on God. The soul hath a burden above it, heavy and unsupportable, and this the truster casteth upon God; and so "he is a loadened and weary man, whom Christ exhorteth to come to him, and he shall find ease for his soul," Mat. xi. 28; Prov. iii. 5. Leaning to ourselves, and trusting in God are opposed. Psal. xxii. 10, trusting is exponed to be "a casting upon God." Psal. xxv. 1, it is called, "a lifting up the soul to him." This one thing is included in the bosom of trusting and believing, that a man hath many burdens too heavy for him, which would sink him down: the believer is such a one as Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12, "O Lord, we have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do." O Lord, I have an army of iniquities against me, a great company compasseth me about; an army of curses as

numerous as mine iniquities; both are innumerable as the sand of the sea; I have no might against them, neither know I what to do: nay, the Lord is against me, his wrath is like the roaring of a lion; what can I do against him? The first beginning of trusting in God is distrusting ourselves; and until a man see his duty and burden beyond his strength, his burden greater than he can bear, you will never persuade him to come to Jesus Christ, and lean on him. We will not preach any such doctrine, as to discharge any to come to Christ, till they be wearied and loaden; for, when a man conceiveth that he wanteth that weariedness, whither shall he go to find it? Is there any fountain, but one, Jesus Christ, both of grace and preparations to it, if any such be? But this we preach unto you, that until you be wearied and loaden, you will not cast your burden on Jesus. We need not discharge you to come till you be such, for certainly you will not come. This is the desperate wickedness of our hearts, that we will never forsake ourselves, till we can do no better. Until men be as David, "I looked on the right-hand, and there was none would know me; refuge failed me," certainly they will not cry to God. Men will look round about them, before they will look up above them; they will cast the burden of their souls upon any thing, upon their own sorrow and contrition, upon their resolution to amend, upon external duties and privileges, upon civil honesty, until all these succumb under the weight of their salvation; and then, it may be, they will ask after him who bare our griefs. I would not willingly speak of preparations to faith, because it putteth men upon searching for something in themselves, upon fashioning their own hearts, and trimming them to come to Christ; whereas there is nothing can be acceptable to him, but what cometh from him. But I think all that men intend, who speak of preparations, may be gained this way, by holding out unto men the impossibility of coming to Christ, till they be emptied of themselves. Not that the one is a thing going before, to be

done by us, but because they are all one; it is one motion of the soul to come out of itself, and into Jesus; it is one thing really to distrust ourselves, and to trust in him; and by this means, when the true nature of faith itself is holden out, men might examine themselves rather by it, whether they have it, than by the preparations of it.

But to come to our purpose, when the soul is pressed under burdens of sin and misery, of duty and insufficiency, and inability to do it, then the gospel discovereth unto the wearied soul a place of reposing and rest. The Lord hath established "Christ Jesus, an ensign to the people;" those who seek unto him shall find "his rest glorious," Isa. xi. 10. When there is discovered in us all emptiness and inability, yea impossibility to save ourselves, or perform any duty, then are we led to Jesus Christ, as one who is come with "grace and truth, in whom it hath pleased the Father all fulness should dwell;" and the turning of the soul over upon him, is trusting in him. You should not mistake this; trusting in the Lord in its first and most native acting, is not always persuasion of his good-will and love in particular. No, the soul meets first with a general promise, holding out his good-will in general; and the soul closeth with this, as a thing both good and true, "as faithful in itself, and worthy of all acceptation." This is it that we must first meet with,—an all-sufficient Saviour, able to save to the utmost all that come to him; and the soul's accepting of that blessed Saviour on the terms he is offered, this is believing in him, and trusting to him, as a complete Saviour.

Now when the soul hath disburdened itself upon God, and set to its seal to the truth of the promises in the gospel for salvation; if the light of the Spirit shine to discover this unto it, that it hath laid hold on "his strength, who is able to save to the utmost," then it becometh persuaded of his love in particular; and this is rather the sealing after believing, than believing itself.

When once men have hazarded their souls upon his

word, and trusted in him, then they may trust in him for all particulars: "he that hath given his Son for us, will he not with him give all things?" This therefore is the continual recourse of a believer,—from discovered emptiness and insufficiency in himself, to travel unto the fulness and strength of Jesus Christ, that his strength may be perfected in weakness. Yea, when all things seem contrary, and his dispensation writes bitter things against us, yet ought we to trust in him, Job xiii. 15. There is a peace of wilfulness and violence in faith, that will look always towards his word, whatever be threatened to the contrary.

Now, from this faith in God, floweth a constant dependence and stayedness on him, "they are stayed on him, because they trusted in him;" for faith discovereth in God such grounds, that it may lean its weight upon him without wavering and changing. It considereth his power, his good will, and his faithfulness; he is able to perform, he is willing to do it, and he is faithful, because he hath promised. His greatness and power is a high rock, higher than we, that faith leadeth us unto. His love and good-will in Jesus Christ, maketh an open entry and ready access to that rock; and faithfulness engageth both to give a shelter and refuge to the poor sinner. Would a soul be any more tossed, would there be any place for wavering and doubting, if souls considered his excellent loving-kindness, and great goodness laid up and treasured with him for those that trust in him? Psalm xxxvi. 7. Who would not put their trust under the shadow of his wings, and think themselves safe? Again, if his eternal power were pondered, how he is able to effectuate whatever he pleaseth; what everlasting arms he hath who by a word supports the frame of the world; what can he do, if he stretch out his arm; and then, if these two immutable things, Heb. vi. 18, his promise and his oath, were looked upon;—how he hath engaged himself in his truth, and sworn in his holiness; would not a soul lie safely between these three? What

strong consolation would such a threefold consideration yield? Would any wind or tempest blow within these walls mounted up to heaven?

Stayedness on God is nothing else but the fixedness of believing and trusting, Psal. cxii. 7, 8; "his heart is fixed, trusting in God; his heart is established." It is even the mature and ripe age of faith. Faith, while it is yet in infancy, in its tender years, neither can endure storms, nor can it confirm us in them; but when it hath sprung up and grown in that root of Jesse, when it is rooted and established in Jesus Christ, then it establisheth the soul. Faith abiding in him and taking root, groweth, confirmed as a tree that cannot easily be moved; and if you establish faith, you shall be established.

There are two particulars which I conceive the trusting soul is stayed on. First, in the meditation of God. Secondly, In expectation from him of all good things. When I say the meditation of God, I take in both contemplation and affection. The most part of men have but few thoughts of God at all; even those who trust in him do not consider sufficiently what a one he is in whom they believe. If faith were vigorous and lively, it would put men to often thinking on him, seeking to know him in his glorious names; the mind would be stayed upon this glorious object, as the most mysterious and wonderful one. How throng (*i. e.* engrossed) are men's minds with their vanities! When they awake, they are not still with God. The meditation of him is a burden to them; any other thing getteth more time and thoughts. But meditation addeth affection to contemplation; men may think long upon the heavens and their course, but their affections are not ravished with them. But thus is the soul stayed on God;—when the soul's desires are towards the remembrance of his name, then affection stayeth the mind upon what it pitcheth on; and certainly the mind giveth but passing looks, constrained thoughts, where the heart is not. Here is David's meditation, Psal. i. "My delight is in the law of the Lord." The soul of a believer should

be constant and fixed in the consideration of God, till he be wholly engaged to admiration and wondering. "O Lord how excellent is thy name," Psal. viii. 1; "and who is like unto thee?" You all say that you believe in God, and know his power—you know he is good, he is merciful, just, long-suffering, faithful, &c. But what is all this knowledge but ignorance, and your light darkness, when it doth not press you to put your trust in his name? You know; nay, but you consider not what you know. This is trusting, when the mind is stayed on what it knoweth, when all the scattered thoughts and affections are called home, and united in one, to be exercised about this comprehensive object, "the Lord our God." It is not want of knowledge destroyeth you, but want of consideration of what you know, and this is brutishness. Men's hearts do not carry the seal and stamp of their knowledge, because thoughts of God and his word are but as passengers that go through a land, as lightning going through the mind, but warms it not; and so their practice carrieth no impression of it either. How base is it for those who have God for their God, to be so ignorant of him! Would not any man willingly travel about his own possessions? Have you such a large portion, believers, and should ye be taken up with other vanities? Should your hearts and minds be stayed on them, more than the living God? There is a great vanity and levity in men's minds; "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men that they are vanity." There is an unsettledness of spirit,—we cannot pitch on that upon which we may be stayed; and so all the spirits of men are in a continual motion from one thing to another, for nothing giveth complete satisfaction, and therefore it must go and try one after another, to see if it can find in it, what it found not in the former. And such is the inconstancy of the spirit, that it licketh up its vomit; and what thing is refused, it eateth it up as its meat. The time is spent in choosing and refusing, rejecting one thing, and taking another, and again returning to what you have rejected. Thus are men tossed up and

down, and unstable in all their ways, as a ship without ballasting. Now, faith and trusting in God is the ballast and weight of this inconstant ship: it is the anchor to stay it from being driven to and fro. If once men would pitch upon this one Lord, who hath in himself eminently all the scattered perfections of creatures, and infinitely more,—if you would consider him, and meditate on him, till your souls loved him, would you not be ravished with him? Would you not build your house beside him, and dwell in the meditation of his name? This would fix and establish you in duties—"when I awake, I am still with thee." A little searching and experience discovereth emptiness in all beside; and therefore is it, that the soul removeth sooner from such a particular creature, than it expected. But here is "One that is past finding out." The more I search and find, I find him the more above what I can search and find. The creatures are but painted and fair in men's apprehension, and at a distance; but the near enjoyment of them discovereth the delusion, and sendeth a man away ashamed, because he trusted. But the Lord God is, and there is no other. He is not as waters that fail,—no liar, he is an everlasting fountain,—the more you dig and draw, it runs the faster; he will never send any away ashamed that trust in him, because they shall find more than they expected.

Therefore the soul that is stayed on meditation of God, and knoweth him certainly, will be fixed in expectation from him. Our expectation from the creatures changeth, because it is often frustrated. Disappointment meets it. It is above what is in the creature, and so it must meet with disappointment; but as he is above our meditation, so is he far above our expectation; and if a man's experience answer his hope, he hath no reason to change his hope. The Lord hath often done things we looked not for, but we never looked for any thing, according to the grounds of the word, but it was done, or a better than it. He doth not always answer our limitations; but if he give gold, when we sought silver, are we not answered? Are we

disappointed? There are three things that use most to disquiet and toss men's spirits,—sin and wrath, future events, and present calamities. Faith establisheth the soul on God in all these, and suffereth it not to be driven to and fro with these winds; it finds a harbour and refuge in God from all these. If he be pursued by the avenger of blood, God's wrath and justice, here is an open city of refuge that he may run to and be safe. If iniquities compass me about, yet I will not fear, but oppose unto that great company the many sufferings and obedience of Jesus Christ. My conscience challengeth and writeth bitter things against me, yet I have an answer "in that blood that speaketh better things than Abel's." If sins prevail, he will purge them away. His mercy is above all my sin, and his virtue and power is above my sin, "He hath promised, and will he not do it?" Oft-times men's souls are perplexed and tossed about future events, careful for to-morrow. This is a great torment of spirit, it cutteth and divideth it,—putteth a man to his own providence, as if there were no God: but he that trusteth in God is established in this, "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." He hath committed his soul to him, and why may he not his body? He hath nothing but his promise for eternal salvation, and may not that same suffice for temporal? He careth for me, saith faith, why then should we both care about one thing? "He hath given his Son for me," the most precious gift, which the world cannot match, "and will he not with him give all these lesser things?" And thus the believer incloseth himself within the Father's love and providence, and is fixed, not fearing evil tidings; for what tidings can be evil, seeing our Father hath the sovereign disposing of all affairs, and knoweth what is best for us? Present dispensations often shake men, and drive them to and fro: their feet slip, and are not established; "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." But if you trusted in God, and considered what is in him to oppose to all difficulties and calamities, you would say, "I shall not be moved,

though the floods lift up their voice." If you believed his love, would not this sweeten all his dealing? "He maketh all work together for good." Sovereignty, righteousness and mercy, are sure and firm ground to stand upon in all storms. You may cast anchor at any of those, and lie secure. "It is the Lord, let him do what he pleaseth." This was enough to quiet the saints in old times. "Should he give account of his matters to us? Shall the clay say to the potter, why is it thus?" His absolute right by creation maketh him beyond all exception, do what he pleases; but beside this, he is pleased and condescendeth to reason with us, and give account of his matters, to testify to our conscience, that he is righteous in all his ways. It was the ground of Jeremiah's settling, Lam. iii. "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed." It should have allayed and stayed Job, "know this, thou art punished less than thy iniquities deserve;" "who will set a time to plead with him? Shall any be found righteous before him?" And this might stop all men's mouths, and put them in the dust to keep silence; seeing he hath law to do infinitely more than he doth, why should not we rather proclaim his clemency, than argue him so very hard? If to both those you shall add the consideration of his mercy, that all his paths are mercy and truth unto you, even when he correcteth most severely, so that you may bless him as well for rods as for meat and clothing, and count yourself blessed when you are taught by the rod and the word, the one speaking to the other, and the other sealing its instruction. If you believed that it were a fruit of his love, "he chasteneth every son whom he loveth," that because he will not let you depart from him, will not let you settle upon a present world, and forget your country above; therefore he compasseth you about with hedges of thorns to keep in your way; and therefore he maketh this world bitter and unpleasant, that you may have no continuing city. If all this were believed, would not the soul triumph with Paul, "What can separate me from the love of God?"—not past things, for all my sins are blotted out, and shall be

remembered no more; not present things, for they work to good, and are a fruit of his love; not things to come, for that is to come which shall more declare his love than what is past. Would not a soul sleep securely within the compass of this power, this love, and faithfulness of God, without fear of dashing or sinking?

Now, judge whether a perfect peace may not flow from all this. May it not be a perfect calm, when the mountains that environ go up to heaven? Not only doth the soul trust in God, but God keepeth the trusting soul in peace. He is the Creator of peace, and the preserver of it,—"I create peace, I keep him in peace." The same power and virtue is required to the preserving of a thing, and the first being of it. Our faith and hope in God is too weak an anchor to abide all storms. Our cords would break, our hands faint and weary, but "he is the everlasting God, who faileth not, and wearieth not." He holdeth an invisible grip of us. "We are kept by his power unto salvation," and we are kept by his power in peace. "Thy right hand holdeth me," saith David, and this helpeth me to pursue thee. What maketh believers inexpugnable, impregnable? is it their strength? No indeed, "But salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Almighty power is a strong wall, though invisible;—this power worketh in us and about us.

Now, believers, pity the world about you, that knoweth not this peace. When they lie secure, and cry peace, peace; alas! they are a city open without walls as the plain field,—there is no keeper there, nothing to hold off destruction. Entertain your own peace, do not grieve the Spirit who hath sealed it. If you return to folly after he hath spoken peace to you, I persuade you, you shall not maintain this peace. There may be peace with God, but no peace in thy conscience, as long as the whoredoms of thy heart are to the fore; thou mayest be secure, but security is worse than fear. Know this, that continuing in a course of sin, entertaining any known sin, shall trouble thy peace. If God hath spoken peace to thee, thou

shalt not lodge that enemy in peace. "Great peace have they that love thy law." Obedience and delight in it doth not make peace, but it is the way of peace; and much meditation on the blessed word of God is the most excellent mean to preserve this peace, if it be secured with much correspondence with heaven by prayer, Phil. iv. 6, 7. If you would disburden your hearts daily at the throne of grace, peace should guard and keep your heart, and then your peace would be perfect indeed. But because your faith is here imperfect, your requests few and infervent, your follies and iniquities many; therefor is this promised perfection a stranger to the most part of Christians. Always [*i. e.* nevertheless] what we want here, we must expect to have made up shortly. Heaven is a land of peace, and all things are there in full age: here all are in minority; it is but yet night; but when the day shal break up, and the shadows fly away, and the Prince of peace shall appear and be revealed, he shall bring peace and grace both with him, and both perfect. To Him be praise and glory.

XIV.

Isa. lix. 20.—And the Redeemer shall come unto Zion, and to them that turn, &c.

Doctrines, as things, have their seasons and times. Every thing is beautiful in its season. So there is no word of truth, but it hath a season and time in which it is beautiful. And indeed that is a great part of wisdom, to bring forth everything in its season, to discern when and where, and to whom it is pertinent and edifying, to speak such and such truths. But there is one doctrine that is never out of season; and therefore it may be preached in season and out of season, as the Apostle commandeth. Indeed to many hearts it is always out of season, and especially in times of trouble and anguish, when it

should be most seasonable, when the opportunity may commend the beauty of it; but in itself, and to as many as have ever found the power of it on their hearts, it is always the most seasonable and pertinent doctrine,—I mean the very subject-matter of this text, the news of a Redeemer to captive sinners. It is in itself such glad tidings, and shines with so much beauty and splendour to troubled sinners, that it casteth abroad a lustre and beauty on the feet of the messengers that carry it, Isa. xl. It is a cordial in affliction, whether outward or inward: and it is withal the only true comfort of prosperity. It allayeth the bitterness of things that cross us, and filleth up the emptiness of things that pretend to please us; it giveth sweetness to the one, and true sweetness to the other. Reason then,—that should always be welcome to us, which we stand always in need of; that it should always be new and fresh in our affection, which is always recent and new in its operation and efficacy toward us. Other news, how great or good soever, suppose they were able to fill the hearts of all in a nation with joy, yet they grow stale, they lose their virtue within few days. What footsteps or remainder is of all the triumphs and trophies of nations, of all their solemnities for their victorious success at home and abroad? These great news which once were the subject of the discourse and delight of many thousands,—who report them now with delight? So those things that may cause joy and triumph to some at this time, as they cannot choose but make more hearts sad than glad; so they will quickly lose even that efficacy they have, and become tasteless as the white of an egg, to them that are most ravished with them. But, my beloved, here is glad tidings of a Redeemer come to Zion to save sinners, which have no occasion of sadness in them to any, but to those who are not so happy as to consider them, or believe them, and they are this day, after many hundred, I may say thousand, years since they were first published, as green and recent, as refreshing to wearied souls as ever they were. Yea, such is the nature

of them, and such an everlasting spring of consolation is in them, that the oftener they be told, and the more they be considered, the sweeter they are. They grow green in old age, and bring forth fruit, and are fat and nourishing; and indeed it is the never-dying virtue and everlasting sap of this word of life, that maketh the righteous so, Psal. xcii. 14. This word of a Redeemer at the first publishing, and for a long time, was but like waters issuing out from under the threshold, and then they came to the ancles, when it was published to a whole nation; but still the longer it swells the higher above knees, and loins, till it be a great inexhausted river, and thus it runs at this day through the world, and hath a healing virtue and a quickening virtue, Ezek. xlvii., and a sanctifying virtue. ver. 9-12. Now this is our errand to you, to invite you to come to these waters. If ye thirst, come to be quenched; if ye thirst not, ye have so much the more need to come, because you thirst after things that will not profit you, will destroy you, and your unsensibleness of your need of this is your greatest misery.

That the words may be more lively unto us, we may call to mind the greatest and deepest design that hath been carried on in the world, by the Maker and Ruler of the world,—the marriage of Christ his Son with the Church. This was primarily intended when he made the world, as a palace to celebrate it in; this was especially aimed at, when he joined Adam and Eve, in the beginning of time, together in paradise, that the second Adam should be more solemnly joined to the church, at the end of time, in the paradise of heaven; and this the apostle draws out as the sampler and arch-copy of all marriages and conjunctions in the creatures, Eph. v. Now this being the great design of God, of which all other things done in time are but the footsteps and low representations, the great question is, how this shall be brought about, because of the great distance and huge disproportion of the parties, "He being the brightness of the Father's glory," and we being wholly eclipsed and darkened since our fall;—"He

higher than the heaven of heavens," and we fallen as low as hell into a dungeon of darkness and misery, led away by sin and Satan, lying in that abominable posture represented in Ezek. xvi; not only unsuitable to engage his love, but fit to procure even the loathing of all that pass by.

Now it being thus, the words do furnish us with the noble resolution of the Son, about the taking away of the distance, and the royal offer of the Father, to make the match hold the better, both flowing from infinite love, in the most free and absolute manner that can be imagined. The Son's resolution, which is withal the Father's promise, is to come into the world first to redeem his spouse, and so to marry her; "and the Redeemer shall come unto Zion," &c. The Father's offer, that he might not be wanting to help it forward, is to dispone, by an irrevocable covenant, having the force of an absolute donation, his word and Spirit to Christ and his seed, to the church, even to the end of the world, ver. 21. "As for me, this is my covenant." The Son hath done his part, and is to express his infinite love, infinite condescendency, and stooping below his majesty. Now, as for me, I will shew my good will to it, in my infinite bounty and riches of grace to the church; he hath given himself for her,—I will give my Spirit; and thus it cannot but hold.

We shall speak a word then of these three; first, what estate and condition Christ findeth his church in, out of which she must be taken to be his spouse; then, what way and course is laid down by the council of heaven, to fill up the infinite distance between Christ and sinners; and, to close all, we shall shew you the suitableness of these promises, and the wonderful fitness of this doctrine to the church, at this time Isaiah preached it, and at all times.

The first is supposed in the words. Redemption supposeth captivity or slavery; redemption of persons importeth captivity and slavery of these persons, and redemption of other things that belong to persons, importeth sale or alienation of our right to them. Of both, personal redemption is the greatest and most difficult; yet both we

have need of, for our estate and fortune, so to speak, is lost, "for all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom iii. 23. That inheritance of eternal life, we have mortgaged it, and given away our right to it. The favour of God and the blessedness of communion with him, was Adam's birthright, and by a free donation was made his proper inheritance and possession, to be transmitted to his posterity, But O! for how small a thing did he give it away,—for a little taste of an apple he sold his estate; and both he and we may lament over it, as the king that was constrained to render himself and all his army for want of water; when he tasted it, "For how small a thing," saith he, "have I lost my kingdom!" Then our persons are in a state of bondage, in captivity and slavery; captives under the wrath of God, and slaves or servants to sin. There needed no greater difference and deformity between Christ and us, than this,—our servitude and bondage to sin, which truly is the basest and most abominable vassalage in the world. The abasement of the highest prince, to the vilest servitude under the basest creatures in his dominion is but a shadow of that loathsome and ugly posture of our souls. This servitude doth in a manner unman us, and transform us into beasts. Certainly it is that which, in the holy eyes of God, is more loathsome than any thing beside. He seeth not that deformity in poverty, nakedness, sickness, slavery. Let a man be as miserable as Job on his dunghill, it is not so much that, as the unseen and undiscerned posture and habit of their souls, that he abominateth. Now what a match is this, for the highest and holiest prince, the Son of the greatest King, and heir of all things! But you must add to this slavery, that captivity under the curse and wrath of God,—that all men are shut up and inclosed in, the prison of God's faithful and irrevocable sentence of condemnation, and given over by the righteous judgment of God, to be kept by Satan in everlasting chains of darkness. He keepeth men now, by the invisible cords of their own sins, but these chains of darkness are reserved

for both him and men. Now indeed, this superaddeth a great difficulty to the business. The other may be a difficulty to his mind and affection, because there is nothing to procure love, but all that may enforce hatred and loathing. But suppose his infinite love could come over this stay, could leap over this mountain by the freedom of it, yet there is a greater impediment in the way, that may seem difficult to his power, and it is the justice and power of God, inclosing sinners and shutting them up for eternal wrath, till a due satisfaction be had from or for them. You see then, how infinite the distance is betwixt him and us, and how great the difficulty is to bring about this intended union. Angels were sent with flaming swords to encompass the tree of life, and keep it from man, but man is environed by the curse of the Almighty God. The justice, the faithfulness, and the power of God do guard or set a watch about him, that there is no access to him to save him, but by undergoing the greatest danger, and undertaking the greatest party that ever was dealt withal, and the strictest and severest too.

This being the case then, the distance being so vast, and the difficulty so great, the distance being twofold, between his nature and ours, and between our quality and his; an infinite distance between his divine nature and our flesh, and besides an extreme contrariety between the holiness of his nature, and the sinfulness of ours, we might suppose the repugnancy to be such as there is no reconciliation of them. You know what Paul speaketh of the marriage of Christians with idolaters; how much more will it hold here? "What communion can be between light and darkness, between God and Belial?" Is it possible these can be reduced to amity, and brought to so near an union? Yet for all this, it is possible; but love and wisdom must find out the way. Infinite love and infinite wisdom consulting together, what distance can they not swallow up? What difficulty can they not overcome?

And here you have it, the distance undertaken to be removed, both by the Father and the Son,—(for all this while we can do nothing to help it forward; while the blessed plot is going on, we are posting the faster to our own destruction). And this is the way condescended upon; *first*, To fill up that wide gap between his divine spiritual nature, and our mortal fleshly nature, it is agreed upon, that the Son shall come in our flesh, and be made partaker of flesh and blood with the children; and this is meant by this promise, "the Redeemer shall come to Sion;" which is plainly expressed by his own mouth, John xvi. 28, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." There being such a distance between his majesty and our baseness, love maketh him stoop down and humble himself to the very state of a servant, Phil. ii. 7, 8. And thus the humiliation of Christ filleth up the first distance; for love and majesty cannot long dwell together, *nec in una sede morantur majestas et amor;* but love will draw majesty down below itself, to meet with the object of it. This was the great journey Christ took to meet with us, and it is downward below himself; but his love hath chosen it, to be like us, though he should be unlike himself. How divinely doth the divine apostle speak of it, "and the Word was made flesh, and he dwelt among us," John i. 14. And therefore the children of Adam may in verity say of him, what the holy Trinity, in a holy irony spoke of man, "Lo, he is become as one of us." It was a singular and eminent privilege conferred upon man in his first creation, that the Trinity in a manner consulted about him, "Let us make man after our image;" but now when man hath lost that image, to have such a result of the council of the Trinity about it, "let one of us be made man, to make up the distance between man and us,"—O! what soul can rightly conceive it without ravishment and wonder, without an ecstacy of admiration and affection!—that the Lord should become a servant!—the Heir of all things be stripped naked of all!—the brightness of the

Father's glory, be thus eclipsed and darkened!—and in a word, that which comprehendeth all wonders in the creation,—who made all things,—he himself made of woman! And God became a man, and all this out of his infinite love, to give a demonstration of love to the world; so high a person abased, to exalt so base and low as we are! There is a mystery in this, a great mystery, a mystery of wisdom, to swallow up the understanding with wonder; and a mystery of love, to ravish the hearts of men with affection,—depths of both, in the emptiness of the Son of God. The prophet doubting what was commanded, to seek a sign, whether in heaven above, or in the depth beneath; but what he would not ask, God gave in his great mercy, "Behold a virgin shall conceive a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel;" a sign indeed from heaven, and the height of heaven, because he is God, and a sign from the depth beneath too, because he is man, "God with us," and so composed to unite heaven and earth together; "God with us," that he might at length bring us to be with God. He became *Immanuel*, that he might make us *Immelanu*. If that was given as tidings of great joy, and as the highest and deepest sign of love and favour, at that time to uphold the fainting church; O! how much more may it now comfort us, when it is not a virgin shall conceive, but a virgin hath conceived. May not the joy be increased, that the Redeemer is not to come, but come already, and hath made up that wide separation which was between us and him, by his low condescendency to his union with our nature. This is one step of advancement towards that happy marriage, that "the whole creation seems to groan and travail for," Rom. viii. 22. But yet there is a great difficulty in the way. We are in a state of captivity; we are prisoners of justice, have sold ourselves and our happiness; and now our natural inheritance lies in the lake of fire and brimstone,—heirs of wrath, concluded under the curse of God; and indeed, this was insuperable to all flesh; neither men nor angels could ransom us from this.

The redemption of the soul of man is so precious, and the redemption of the inheritance of man, that is, heaven, is so precious too, that none in heaven or earth can be found, that can pay the price of them, so that it would have ceased for ever. And here the great design of Christ's union with sinners would have been marred and miscarried, if himself had not undertaken to overcome this too; and indeed, as there could none be found to open the seals of the book of God's decrees concerning his church,—none worthy in heaven or earth but the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah; he prevailed to open it, and loose the seals thereof, Rev. v. 3, 4, 5. So there could none be found in heaven or earth, neither under the earth, worthy to undertake or accomplish this work, or able to open the seals of the book of God's curses, or to blot out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, or to open the prison of death in which man was shut up; none, I say, hath been found worthy or prevailed, but the Lamb of God and Lion of the tribe of Judah; and therefore the four and twenty elders that sit round about the throne, and the four beasts, with the innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, fell down before the Lamb, every one of them with harps, and they sung a new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." And every creature says, Amen to this, and consents to this, to do him homage; to him who alone was worthy, and as willing to do it as worthy of it. I think the 16th verse of this chapter gives us a sensible representation of this. The preceding discourse from the beginning, holding out the sinful and deplorable condition of that people, and in them, as a type of the desperate wickedness of all mankind, and withal their desperate misery, for Paul, Rom. iii. maketh the application for us; and from this, concludeth all under sin, and so all under wrath, all guilty, that every mouth may be stopped; men waiting for

light, and behold obscurity; for brightness, but walking in darkness; groping for the wall, like the blind, stumbling at noon-day as in the night, and being in desolate places as dead men; all roaring like beasts, and mourning like doves, whenever the apprehension of the terror of God entereth. Now it is subjoined, verse 16, "And he saw that there was no man," &c.; as if he had waited and looked through all the world, if any would appear, either to speak or do for man, if any would offer themselves, and interpose themselves for his salvation. "Therefore his own arm brought salvation, and his righteousness it sustained him." Therefore, the Son of God steps in and offers himself, as if God had first essayed all others, and when heaven is full of wonder and silence, he breaks out in this, "Lo, I come to do thy will," Psal. xl. Since I have gotten a body to be like sinners, I will also come in their place, and I will give my life a ransom for them; and therefore it is subjoined, "the Redeemer shall come to Zion;" he shall come clothed with vengeance and indignation as a garment, against the enemies of his church, sin and Satan, in zeal and burning love to his designed spouse. He shall strengthen himself, and stir up his might and fury against all that detain her captive.

Now, indeed, he is the only fittest person for this business in heaven or earth; for he hath both right to do it, and he only hath might and power to accomplish it. He hath right to the redemption of sinners, because he is our kinsman, nearest of blood to us. Now, you know the right of redemption belonged to the kinsman, Lev. xxv. 25.

And therefore when the nearest kinsman could not redeem Naomi and Ruth's parcel of land, Boaz did it, as being next. And suitable to this, our Lord Jesus, when others as near could not, and were not able, himself hath done it, and taken men and angels to witness, that he hath first redeemed us, that he might marry us, as Eph. v. That he hath purchased us to be his wife; and indeed the very word imports this; *Goel*, a redeemer and

kinsman, passing under one word: so Job, "I know that my redeemer, or my kinsman liveth:" and because our kinsman, therefore most interested in our redemption; for "for this end he became partaker of flesh and blood with the children, that he might destroy our greatest enemy, Satan, and redeem us," Heb. ii. 14. And besides, he hath right to redemption, as the Church's husband, because he must mediate between her and all others; none can reach her, except he please, or prosecute a plea against her, as in the case of the wife's making a vow; if her husband consented not, it was void, Numb. xxx; but if he heard of it and held his peace, it was confirmed. Now the Lord Jesus hath known this deplorable estate in which we are captives; and he hath testified his utter dislike of our binding over ourselves to death, and resigning ourselves to Satan; and therefore this bondage, in which we are detained, is not confirmed and ratified, but he hath right remaining to redeem us from the hand of all our enemies. But then, he alone hath might and power to do it, for God hath laid help on him, and made him able and mighty to save us to the uttermost. It was not gold or silver, or corruptible things. Suppose the whole earth were turned into gold or precious stones; he must give person for person, and one person equivalent to all—his own life, his own blood for us; and the value of this was infinitely raised by the stamp of his divinity put upon it. The king for the servant,—one that knew no sin for sinners,—yea, God for man! This superadds infinite worth, and makes it an over-ransom, and over-purchase, a ransom to buy our persons from hell, a purchase to redeem us to our inheritance, heaven, that we had lost; and these two styles it gets, λυτρον αντιλυτρον.

Now, you see the great difficulty is overcome and taken out of the way; Christ, being made a curse, hath purchased a redemption from the curse of the law, Gal. iv. 13. But yet, there is another point of vast distance, I may say contrariety and enmity, between us and him. He is holy and undefiled, all fair, and no spot in him; we

are wholly defiled and depraved by sin; our souls are become the habitation of devils, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; in a word, he hath not only our enemies to overcome, but our own hearts to conquer, and our enmity to take away. This makes the widest separation from him. Now, he filled up much of the distance, with his taking our flesh, and he removed the great difficulty, by dying in our flesh: his humiliation to be a man, brought him nearer us; and his further humiliation to be a dying, crucified, and buried man, brought him yet a step nearer us. But nearer he cannot come, for lower he cannot be except he were a sinner, which would mar the whole design, and take away all the comfort of his likeness to us. Therefore, since he hath come so low down to us, it is suitable we be raised up one step to meet him: and so the exaltation of sinners shall make up all the distance, and bring the two parties to that long since designed, and long desired meeting. Now, for this end and purpose, the Son undertakes the redemption of his church from sin and ungodliness as well as wrath; and therefore you have that which is expressed as the character of the redeemed in this verse. It is exponed as the great point or part of the redemption itself, by the apostle, Rom. xi. "The Redeemer shall come to Sion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." And so his end was not only to be a partaker of our nature, but to make us partakers of the divine nature; and therefore the Father, out of his love to this business, promised to send his Spirit to dwell in our hearts, to make the word sound in our mouths and ears, and the Spirit to work in our hearts; and this exaltation of sinners to the participation of the Holy Spirit, together with Christ's humiliation to partake of our flesh, makes up the full distance, and bringeth Christ and his church to that holy patient impatience, and longing for the day when it shall be solemnized in heaven. "The Spirit within us, says come, and the bride says come: even so come, Lord Jesus." And he waits for nothing, but the completing and adorning of all the rest, that there may be one

jubilee for all and for ever. Now I wish we could understand the absolute and free tenor of God's covenant. There is much controversy speculative about the condition of the covenant, about the promises, whether absolute or conditional; and there is too much practical debate in perplexed consciences about this, how to find something in themselves to fit and fashion them for the redemption. But truly, if we would not disjoin and dismember the truth of God, but take it all entirely as one great design of love and mercy revealed to sinners, and so conjoin the promises of the covenant into one bundle, we would certainly find that it hath the voice of Jacob, though it seem to have the hand of Esau; we find an absolute, most free and unconditioned sense, when there is a conditional strain and shadow of words in some places. The truth is, the turning of souls from ungodliness is not properly a condition exacted from us, as a promise to be performed in us, and the chiefest part of Christ's redemption; and though some abuse the grace of God, and turn it into wantonness and liberty, yet certainly, this doctrine, that makes the greatest part of the glad news of the gospel to be redemption from sin, and the pouring out of the Spirit, is the greatest persuasive to a godly conversation, and the most deadly enemy to all ungodliness.

I thought to have spoken more of that third thing I proponed, but take it in a word. This was always proponed to the church as the strongest cordial, it was given here as the greatest consolation in all their long captivity, that this Redeemer was afterwards to come, whose virtue was then living, and present to the quickening and comforting of souls. It was thought enough to uphold in a most desperate strait, "To us a child is born," Isa. ix. I wish we could take it so. Certainly it was the character of a believer before Christ's coming, that he was one that was looking and waiting for the salvation of Israel, by this Redeemer. But now we are surrounded with consolation before and behind,—Christ already come, so that we may in joy say, Lo! this is our God, we have waited for

him! others waited and longed, and we see him; and Christ shortly to come again without sin, to our salvation. And what could be able to take our joy from us, if we had one eye always back to his first coming. and another always forward to his coming again?

XV.

Isa. lxiv. 6, 7.—But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, &c.

This people's condition agreeth well with ours, though the Lord's dealing be very different. The confessory part of this prayer belongeth to us now; and strange it is, that there is such odds of the Lord's dispensations, when there is no difference in our conditions; always [*i. e.* notwithstanding] we know not how soon the complaint may be ours also. This prayer was prayed long before the judgment and captivity came on, so that it had a prophecy in the bosom of it. Nay, it was the most kindly and affectionate way of warning the people could get, for Isaiah to pour forth such a prayer, as if he beheld with his eyes the calamity, as already come. And indeed it becometh us so to look on the word, as if it gave a present being to things as certain and sensible as if they were really. What strange stupidity must be in us, when present things, inflicted judgments, committed sins, do not so much affect us, as the foresight of them did move Isaiah. Always, as this was registrate for the people's use, to cause them still look on judgments threatened, as performed and present, and anticipate the day of affliction by repentance; and also to be a pattern to them, how to deal with God, and plead with him from such grounds of mercy and covenant-interest: so it may be to us a warning, especially when sin is come to the maturity, and our secure backsliding condition is with child of sad judgments, when the harvest seemeth ripe to put the sickle into it.

There is in these two verses, a confession of their own sinfulness, from which grounds they justify God's proceeding with them; they take the cause upon themselves, and justify him in his judging, whether temporal or spiritual plagues were inflicted. In this verse, they take a general survey of their sinful estate, concluding themselves unclean, and all their performances and commanded duties, which they counted once their righteousness: and from this ground, they clear God's dealing with them and put their mouths in the dust; and so from the Lord's judgment they are forced to enter into a search of the cause of so much sin; and from discovered sin, they pronounce God righteous in his judgment. Perceiving a great difference in the Lord's manner of dealing with them, and their fathers, they do not refound it upon God, who is righteous in all his ways, but retort it upon themselves, and find a vast disrepance between themselves and their fathers, verse 5. And so it was no wonder that God's dispensation changed upon them. God was wont to meet others, to shew himself gracious, even to prevent strokes; but now he was wroth with them. Nay, but there is good cause for it, "They rejoice and wrought righteousness," but we have sinned. And this may be said in the general,—never one needeth to quarrel God for severe dealing. If he deal worse with one than with another, let every man look into his own bosom, and see reason sufficient; yea, more provocation in themselves than others. Always [*i.e.* nevertheless] in this verse, they come to a more distinct view of their loathsome condition. Anybody may wrap up their repentance in a general notion of sin, but they declare themselves to be more touched with it, and condescend on particulars, yet such particulars as comprehend many others. And in this confession, you may look on the Spirit's work, having some characters of the Spirit in it. *First*, They take a general view of their uncleanness and loathsome estate by sin; not only do they see sin, but sin in the sinfulness of it and uncleanness of it. *Secondly*, They not only conclude so of the natural estate they were born in, and

the loathsomeness of their many foul scandals among them; but they go a further length, to pass as severe a sentence on their duties and ordinances as God hath done, Isa. i. and lxvi. The Spirit convinceth according to scripture light, and not according to the dark spark of nature's light; and so that which nature would have busked [*i. e.* decked] itself with as its ornament, that which they had covered themselves with as their garment, had spread their duties as robes of righteousness over their sins to hide them; all this now goeth under the name of filthiness and sin. They see themselves wrapt up in as vile rags as they covered and hid: commanded duties and manifest breaches come in one category. And not only is it some of them which their own conscience could challenge in the time, but all of them and all kinds of them, moral and ceremonial, duties that were most sincere, had most affection in them, all of them are filthy rags now, which but of late were their righteousness. *Thirdly*, There is an universality, not only of the actions, but of persons; not only all the peoples or multitudes' performances are abomination, but all of them,—and one and other, the holiest of them, come in in this category and rank—"we are all unclean," &c. Though the people, it may be, could not join holy Isaiah with themselves, yet humble Isaiah will join himself with the people, and come in, in one prayer. And no doubt, he was as sensible of sin now, as when he began to prophesy; and growing in holiness, he must grow also in sense of sinfulness. Seeing at the first sight of God's holiness and glory, he cried "unclean," &c. Isa. vi. 5, certainly he doth so now, from such a principle of access to God's holiness, which maketh him abhor himself in dust and ashes. *Fourthly*, They are not content with such a general, but condescend to two special things, two spiritual sins, viz. omission, or shifting of spiritual duties, which contained the substance of worship. "None calleth on thee," few or none, none to count upon calleth on thee; that is, careth for immediate access and approaching unto

God in prayer and meditation, &c. Albeit external and temple-duties be frequent, yet who prayeth in secret; or if any pray, that cannot come in count, the Lord knoweth them not, because they want the Spirit's stamp on them. This must be some other thing than the general conviction of sin which the world hath, who think they pray all their days; here people, who though they make many prayers, Isa. i., yet they see them no prayers, and no calling on God's name now. But, *fifthly*, To make the challenge the more, and the confession more spiritual and complete, there is discovered to them this ground of their slackness and negligence in all spiritual duties, "None stirreth up himself to take hold on thee." Here is the want of the exercise of faith: faith is the soul's hand and grip, John i. 12. Heb. vi. 18. 1 Tim. vi. 12. Isa. xxvii. 5. Nobody awaketh themselves out of their deadness and security, to lay hold on thee. Lord, thou art going away, and taking good-night of the land, and no body is like to hold thee by the garment: "No Jacobs here, who will not let thee go, till thou bless them;" none to prevail with thy Majesty,—every one is like to give Christ a free passport and testimonial to go abroad, and are almost Gadarenes, to pray him to depart out of their coasts. There is a strange looseness and indifferency in men's spirits concerning the one thing necessary. Men lie by and dream over their days, and never put the soul's estate out of question; none will give so much pains, as to clear their interest in thee, to lay hold on thee, so as they may make peace with thee. Now, can there be a more ample and lively description of our estate, both of the land and of particular persons of it. Since this must not be limited to the nation of the Jews, though the prophet spake of the generality of them, yet, no doubt, all mankind is included in the first six verses; and any secure people may be included in the seventh verse, for Paul applieth even such like speeches (Rom. xiii.) that were spoken, as you would think, of David's enemies only. Yet the Spirit of God knowing the mind

of the Spirit, maketh a more general use of their condition, to hold out the natural estate of all men out of Christ Jesus.

But there are in these two verses other two things beside the acknowledgment of sin; *First*, The acknowledgment of God's righteousness in punishing them, for now they need not quarrel God, they find the cause of their fading in their own bosom. They now join sin and punishment together, whereas in the time of their prosperity, they separated punishment from sin; and in the time of their security in adversity, they separated sin from punishment: at one time making bare confession of sin, without fear of God's justice, at another time fretting and murmuring at his judgments, without the sense of their sin. But now they join both these, and the sight and sense of God's displeasure maketh sin more bitter, and to abound more, and to appear in the loathsome and provoking nature of it, so that their acknowledgment hath an edge upon it. And again, the sight and sense of sin maketh the judgment appear most righteous, and stoppeth their mouth from murmuring. In the time of their impenitency under the rod, their language was very indifferent, Ezek. xviii. 2, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" they have sinned and we suffer; they have done the wrong and we pay for it. But it is not so now, ver. 5. The fathers have done righteousness in respect of us, and thou wast good unto them, but we are all unclean, and have sinned, and so we are punished. *Secondly*, They find some cause and ground in God of their general defection, not that he is the cause of their sin, but in a righteous way he punished sin with sin. God hid his face, denied special grace and influence; and so they lie still in their security, and their sin became a spiritual plague. Or this may be so read,—None calleth on thy name, when thou didst hide thy face from us, and when thou didst consume us because of our iniquities; and so it serveth to aggravate their deep security, that, though the Lord was departing from them,

yet none would keep him and hold him. Though he did strike, yet they prayed not; affliction did not awake them out of security, and so the last words, "Thou hast consumed us," &c., are differently exponed and read. Some make it thus, as it is in the translation, "Thou hast hid thy face, and left us in a spiritual deadness," that so there might be no impediment to bring on deserved judgment. If we had called on thee, and laid hold on thee, it might have been prevented, we might have prevailed with God, but now our defence is removed, and thou hast given us up to a spirit of slumber, and so we have no shield to hold off the stroke,—thou hast now good leave to consume us for our sins. Another sense may be —Thou hast suffered us to consume in our iniquity, thou hast given us up to the hand of our sins. And this is also a consequent of his hiding his face: because thou didst hide thy face, thou lettest us perish in our sins; there needeth no more for our consumption, but only help us not out of them, for we can soon destroy ourselves.

I. Sin is in its own nature loathsome, and maketh one unclean before God. Sin's nature is filthiness, vileness, so doth Isaiah speak of himself, chap. vi. 5, when he saw God's holiness; so doth Job abhor himself, which is the affection which turneth a man's face off a loathsome object, when he saw God, Job xl. 4, and xlii. 6. Look how loathsome our natural condition is holden out by God himself, Ezek. xvi. You cannot imagine any deformity in the creature, any filthiness, but it is there. The filthiness and vileness of sin shall appear, if we consider *first*, that sin is a transgression of the holy and spiritual command, and so a vile thing; "the commandment is holy and good," Rom. vii. And sin violateth and goeth flat contrary to the command, 1 John iii. When so just and so equitable a law is given, God might have exacted other rigorous duties from us, but when it is so framed, that the conscience must cry out, All is equity, all is righteous, and more than righteous; thou mightest command

more, and reward none; it is justice to command, but it is mercy to promise life to obedience, which I owe;—what then must the offence be, against such a just command, and so holy. If holiness be the beauty of the creation, sin must be the deformity of it, the only spot in its face.

Secondly, Look upon sin in the sight of God's holiness and infinite majesty, and O how heinous will it appear! and therefore no man hath seen sin in the vileness of it, but in the light of God's countenance, as Isa. vi. 5. Job. xl. and xlii. "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," he cannot look on it, Hab. i. 13. All other things beside sin God looketh on them as bearing some mark of his own image, "all was very good, and God saw it," Gen. i. and ii. Even the basest creatures God looketh on them, and seeth himself in them; but sin is only God's eye-sore, that his holiness cannot away with it, it is most contrary unto him; and as to his sovereignty, it is a high contempt and rebellion done to God's Majesty. It putteth God off the throne, will take no law from him, will not acknowledge his law, but, as it were, spitteth in his face, and establisheth another god. There is no punishment so evil, that God will not own as his work, and declare himself to be the author of it, but only sin; his soul abhorreth it, his holy will is against it, he will have no fellowship with it: it is so contrary to him, contradicteth his will, debaseth his authority, despiseth his sovereignty, vilipendeth his truth. There is a kind of infiniteness in it; nothing can express it but itself, no name worse than itself to set it out; the apostle can get no other epithet to it, Rom. vii. 13, "sinful sin;" so that it cometh in most direct opposition unto God. All that is in God, is God himself, and there is no name can express him sufficiently; if you say God, you say more than can be exprest by many thousand other words. So it is here,—sin is purely sin, God is purely good and holy, without mixture, holiness itself; sin is simply evil, without mixture, unholiness itself. Whatever is in it, is sin, is uncleanness; sin is an infinite wrong, and an infinite and

boundless filthiness, because of the infinite person wronged It is an offence of infinite Majesty, and the person wronged aggravateth the offence; if it be simply contrary to infinite holiness, it must be, in that respect, infinite unholiness and uncleanness.

Thirdly, Look upon the sad effects and consequences of sin,—how miserable, how ruinous it hath made man, and all the creation, and how vile must it be! *First*, Look on man's native beauty and excellency, how beautiful a creature! But sin hath cast him down from the top of his excellency; sin made Adam of a friend an enemy, of a courtier with God an open rebel. Was not man's soul of more price than all the world, so that nothing can exchange it? Yet hath sin debased it, and prostituted it to all vile filthy pleasures; hath made the immortal spirit dwell on the dunghill, feed on ashes, catch vanities, lying vanities, pour out itself to them, serve all the creatures—whereas it should have made them servants; yea, a slave to his own greatest enemy, to the ground he treadeth upon. O what a degenerate plant! It was a noble vine once in paradise, but sin hath made it a wild one, to bring forth sour grapes. What is there in all the world could defile a man? Matt. xv. 20. "Nothing that goeth out or cometh in, but sin that proceedeth out of the heart." Man was all light, his judgment shined into his affections, and through all the man; but sin hath made all darkness, closed up the poor captive understanding, hath built up a thick wall of gross corrupted affections about it, so that light can neither get in nor out. The soul was like a clear running fountain, which yielded fresh clear streams of holy inclinations, desires, affections, actions, and emptied itself into the sea of immense Majesty from which these streams first flowed; but now it is a standing putrified puddle, that casteth a vile stink round about, and hath no issue towards God. Man was a glorious creature, fit to be lord over the work of God's own hands, and therefore had God's image in a special manner, holiness and righteousness, God's nature.

A piece of divinity was stamped on man, which outshined all created perfections. The sun might blush when it looked on him, for what was material glory to the glory of holiness and beauty of God's image! But sin hath robbed poor man of this glorious image, hath defaced man, marred all his glory, put on a hellish likeness on him. Holiness only putteth the difference between angels in heaven and devils in hell; and sin only hath made the difference between Adam in paradise, and sinners on the cursed ground, Rom. iii. 23.

Secondly, Sin hath so redounded through man unto all the creation, that it hath defiled it, and made it corruptible and subject to vanity, Rom. viii. 20, &c.; so that this is a spot in all the creature's face,—that man hath sinned, and used all as weapons of unrighteousness, so that now the creature groaneth to be delivered.

Thirdly, It hath brought on all the misery that is come on man, or that is to come; it hath brought on death and damnation as its wages, and the curse of the eternal God, Gal. iii. 13. Rom. vi. 23. How odious then an evil must it be, that hath so much evil in it; yea, all evil in the bosom of it! Hell is not evil in respect of sin, for sin deserveth hell; it hath ruined man, and made all the beautiful order of the creation to change.

Fourthly, It separateth man from God, which is worst of all; and this is included in the text, "We are all as an unclean thing," or man is as a leprous man set apart, because of pollution, that may not come to the temple, or worship God; so hath iniquity separated between God and us, Isa. lix. 2. And O how sad a divorcement is this! it maketh men without "God in the world, in whom we live, and move, and have our being; in whose favour is life, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore." Now poor man is made miserable, deprived of his felicity, which only consisted in enjoyment of God. Sin, as a thick partition-wall, is come in between, enmity also is come in, and divideth old friends, Eph. ii. 14—17. And now no heavenly or comfortable influence

can break through; the night of darkness is begun, which must prove everlasting. Except the partition-wall be removed, all must wither and decay as without the sun.

Fifthly, Look on the price paid for sin, on the cleansing that washeth it away, and you may see unspeakable deformity and vileness in it. The redemption of the soul is precious; silver and gold and precious stones will not do it,—that would be utterly contemned. What, saith God, presumptuous sinner, wilt thou give a farthing in payment of a sum, which all the world, sold at the dearest, would not discharge? Psal. xlix. 7, 8. 1 Pet. i. 18. "It is no corruptible thing, but the blood of the Son of God." O what must the debt be, when the price is so infinite! The Son of God must die; nay, "It is not sacrifice or offering;—lo, I come to do thy will;" it is Christ himself that is the ransom, Psal. xl. 6, 7. And it is not much soap or nitre, it is not much repentance and tears that will wash away this filthiness; no, it is of a deeper dye, "It is crimson ingrained filthiness," Jer. ii. 22, and Isa. i. 16. "Blood of bulls and goats cannot do it, but only the blood of the immaculate Lamb offered up by himself," Heb. x. 4, 5. "The blood of Him, who by the eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot unto God," Heb. ix. 14. What must sin be, that must have such a fountain opened for it? It must be strange uncleanness when the blood of Christ only can cleanse it, Zech. xiii. 1.

II. "We all," &c. Mark, *secondly*, Sin hath gone over us all, and made all mankind unclean, Rom iii. 10, 22, Every one of Adam's posterity is born unclean, "for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job xiv. 4. Consider, 1. How sin defaced innocent Adam, how one sin made him so vile, and spoiled him of the divine nature; and so the root was made unclean, and the branches must follow the root, and so are we all born and conceived in sin, Psalm li. 5. We carry in us original corruption, flowing from the first actual sin of Adam; and this maketh poor children, before they do good or evil, to

be abominably vile in God's sight, even as the child is set out, Ezek. xvi. Every one cometh of evil parents, all come of Adam the rebel; what a loathsome sight would a child be to us so described, "Cast out in the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day it is born;" and what must it all be before God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold sin?" 2. Unto all this we have added innumerable actual transgressions as so many filthy streams flowing out at the members, from the inward puddle of original corruption; and so how much more vile are we all than infants can be, or Adam was in the day he was cast out of paradise! And thus, Rom. iii. from verse 10, are the branches set down in word, thought, and deed; so that all the inclinations and motions and actions of the man are only evil continually. Every man shall find his count past counting; one day's faults would weary you, but what will your whole life do? Known sins are innumerable, what must unknown sins be? Every man's heart is like the troubled sea, that casteth up mire and dirt daily, and cannot be at rest. The heart is daily flowing and ebbing in this corruption, it cometh out daily to the borders of all the members; and there are some high spring-tides, when sin aboundeth more. When in one member of the tongue a world of evil is, what can be in all the members? And what in the soul, that is more capable than all the world? Well then, every man hath sinned in Adam, and hath sinned also in his own person, and sealed Adam's first rebellion by so many thousand actions like it. Every man hath approven the sin that first ruined man, and made himself much more loathsome than Adam was; therefore all mankind may say, "We all are as an unclean thing." Now from all this, we would gladly discover unto you what your condition is by sin; if the Lord would shine, how vile would you be! Always [*i. e.* nevertheless] we must declare this unto you in the Lord's name, you are all unclean, not only born in sin and iniquity, not only have you a body of death within you, that hath all the members; but all these members

have one time or other acted and brought forth fruit unto death. How vile, then, must you be in God's sight! It is a strange love that you have to yourselves, that you cannot apprehend how God can hate you! But if he find sin in you, wonder rather how he can look upon you; we would then have you to know this, that there can be no fellowship between God and you in your natural estate. As men cannot inhabit a vile person's house, no more can God enter into your souls. There is an absolute necessity of washing, before you can be his house and temple. Hath that one sin of Adam made that glorious person so deformed, that he could not look on himself, but cover himself? And hath it been of so defiling a nature, that it hath redounded in all the posterity; and, as unclean things under the law, defiled all they touched, so hath that sin subjected all the creatures to corruption? O then imagine what an unspeakable defilement must be on us all, who are not only guilty of Adam's sin, but of many thousands beside! If one sin have so much loathsomeness in it, what must so many out of number, united in one person, even as in us all? "No unclean thing can enter into heaven above:" know this for a truth, you cannot see God's face in the case in which you are born. You know nothing of sin, who wonder that any should go to hell. No, if you knew anything of sin, you would wonder that ever God should look on such cast out in the open field in their blood.

Next, You must know the insufficiency of all things imaginable, to wash away sin's filthiness, except the blood of Christ. Since you are unclean, do you not ask, how shall we be washed? Indeed many have an easy answer, and pass it lightly. The multitude know no way to cleanse in, but the tears of repentance and mourning; and so, many think themselves clean, when they run and pour out a tear as Esau did for the blessing. But what saith the Lord? "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked." Can such an ingrained uncleanness, can such an infinite spot in the

immortal soul, be so lightly dashed out? Many think baptism cleanseth them, but was not this people circumcised, as ye are baptized? And Peter tells us, it is not the washing of water, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Sacrifice and offering will not do it. This people thought, sure they had satisfied God, when they brought a lamb, &c., but all this is abomination. Would not many of you think yourselves cleansed from sin, if you offered all your substance, and the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul? Nay, but you must see an absolute necessity of the opened fountain of Christ's blood, that cleanseth from all sin.

Then we would have you abhor yourselves in dust and ashes, see nothing in all the creation so vile as you; look on sin in the sight of God's face, and how unholy will it appear! There are many sins, little ones, that in our practice pass for venal and uncontrolled; but look on the filthy loathsome nature of all sin, and hate the least offence, for it hath a kind of infiniteness in it, and blotteth the soul, defileth the person. How great a necessity is there of continual application to the fountain, of dwelling beside it, that you may wash daily! David's so often repeated, and inculcated prayer, "Wash me, cleanse me," &c. Psalm li. declareth that he hath apprehended much uncleanness in sin, that it needeth so many applications of the precious blood. And you who have come to Jesus, and are clean, O how much owe you to free grace, that passed by you in your blood, and said, "Live, it is a time of love!" How strange is it, that glorious Majesty cometh to own deformity, and cometh to clothe it with his own garments! Praise the virtue of that blood, that is more precious than the blood of bulls and goats, that can so throughly purge, as you shall have no more conscience of sin.

Unclean sinners, wash you, make you clean,—there is a fountain opened; though sin were as scarlet, it can perfectly change the colour of it. If you wash not while the fountain is open, it will quickly be sealed on you, and then it shall be said, when the "angel sweareth by him that

liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no more," then it shall be said, "let him that is unclean be unclean still." Now, cleansing is offered in the gospel,—if you will love your loathsomeness so well, as not to dip yourselves in this fountain, then let the unclean be so still. Your repentance will never change your colour, though you should melt in sorrow; and therefore you who have found a way to be saved otherwise than by Jesus Christ, you shall be deceived. Your tears and mourning that you might have had, though Christ had never come into the world, is all you use to speak of, and build your hope on; and if you speak of Christ, it is in such terms as to buy him by such repentance; so that the truth is, you use but Christ's name as a shadow, you make no use of him; he needed not to have come into the world, for many of you could have done as well without him. But as many of you as cannot find cleansing, who see filth increase by washing, come to Christ Jesus, and say, "if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," Matt. viii. 2. Nothing beside Jesus can do it, believe his sufficiency; nothing beside him will do—believe his willingness; for, for this cause he is an opened fountain, that all may come and draw.

XVI.

Isa. lxiv. 6, 7.—All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Not only are the direct breaches of the command uncleanness, and men originally and actually unclean, but even our holy actions, our commanded duties. Take a man's civility, religion, and all his universal inherent righteousness, all are filthy rags. And here the church confesseth nothing but what God accuseth her of, Isa. lxvi. 3, and chap. i. ver. 11, 12, 13, &c. This people was much in ceremonial and external duties; and therefore they cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the

Lord!" as if this would have outcried all their other sins; therefore were they proud, and lords in their own estimation, and innocent, Jer. ii. 31, 35. They thought the many good services they did to God might compense all their wrongs, Mic. vi. 6, 7. They gave a price to justice for their sins, even a confession of it, by offering a lamb, &c. and a purpose to amend. But, lo! what sense the prophet hath of all this, "Lord, all our righteousnesses" are filthy likewise. Albeit we have paid the debt of sins with duties, yet now we see all these are sins themselves, and must have another sacrifice; so that all matter of boasting is now removed, and we are stript naked of all righteousness. We covered our filthiness before with duties, now both the one and the other is filthy. We would look upon two sorts of righteousness, the natural man's, and the converted man's, upon the one's civility and fair profession, and upon the other's real or true grace in discharge of duties; and we shall find good reason to conclude both the one and the other under filthiness, so that there is no ground of boasting, no inherent righteousness can make us accepted before God.

First, then, Whatever men can do from natural principles, all the flower and perfection of men's actions, both civil and religious, is but abominable before God, as long as their persons are unjustified. Every performance is defiled by the uncleanness of the person; and therefore "God heareth not sinners," John viii. that is, unjustified sinners; though they pray much, yet God heareth them not. And this is lively expressed by Hag. ii. 12, 13, 14. As the priest's holy garments and flesh could not make bread or pottage holy, but the unclean body could make these unclean; so this nation's and people's performances and holy duties, could not make them holy, and their persons clean, but their unclean persons and actions made all their performances unclean. The solemn meeting and sacrifice, &c. could not make them accepted, but their unclean persons made their solemn meetings and religious duties vile and abominable in God's sight: and thus

"to the unclean all things are unclean, even their mind and conscience," Tit. i. 15. The unbelieving man, who is born unclean, and defiled with so much original corruption, and so many actual transgressions, defileth all things he toucheth; as a dead body, or a leprous garment, under the law, made all unclean it touched, and nothing could make it holy by touching of it; so all your civility, all your profession, will never contribute to the cleansing of your person; and your persons shall defile all your most clean actions. God loveth not that stock of Adam, and all that groweth on it must be hateful; he is only well-pleased in Jesus Christ, and with those who are transplanted out of rotten Adam into the true vine Jesus. It is such fruit only that can be acceptable; therefore, until you be sprinkled with clean water, and made clean according to the new covenant-way, you cannot please God. Believe this,—your sins and your duties are one, your oaths and your prayers are in the same account with God. What have you then to build upon, when all this is removed? You must once be stript naked of all coverings; and will not your nakedness then be great? The pharisee went away unjustified, and the poor repenting sinner justified. What was the reason? There are not many of you have such a fair venture for heaven as he had,—so many prayers, fastings, alms, to ground your hope on. Nay, but all this would never justify his person, because once he was unclean, come of Adam, and had contracted more uncleanness, and all that is like the leprous garment, defiling all that cometh near it; so that whatever hath any dependence on a son of Adam, must contract filthiness. Now, I ask your consciences, have you so many specious coverings to adorn yourself with? Is not your outside spotted, and not so clean as the civil young man and the religious pharisee? Certainly no; and yet you have no other ground to plead the acceptation of your persons upon, but only this, your prayers and tears, or some such duty performed by you. Well, all is uncleanness, since your persons were once unclean,—no soap nor

nitre can wash it, no holy flesh make it holy, no good wishes or duties can make it acceptable. Did not this people think of their duties as much as you do? And had more reason so to do; for our congregations have not so much form of godliness as they had, and yet God solemnly protested to them, that all their works were defiled, even those which they took to wash themselves with. So your repentance and tears must be as filthy as the sin you would wash by it.

Secondly, The uncleanness of men's practice maketh unclean performances, "Unclean hands make unclean prayers," Isa. i. 15. When men go on in sin, and use their members as instruments of unrighteousness against God, and guiltiness is above their head unrepented of and unpardoned, then whatever the members act for God in religious duties, it must be also abominable; for will God take prayers from such a mouth, that cursing cometh out of? Isa. iii. 10, 11, 12. Shall sweet water come out of one fountain with bitter? Or can a fig-tree bear both thistles and grapes? Certainly, profane conversation must make unclean profession; and therefore your coming to the church and ordinances, your praying in your families, or such like, must of necessity be defiled, since out of the same mouth cometh cursing, railing, lying, filthy speeches. Your tongues are so often employed in God's dishonour, to blaspheme his name, to slander your neighbours, to reproach the saints, that all your prayers must be of the same stamp, and as bitter as the other stream of your actions. When you stretch forth your hands to make many prayers, to take the bread and wine, shall not God hide his face from such hands as are unclean with many abominations, some murdering, some abusing their neighbours, some sabbath-breaking, some filthiness? How oft have your hands and feet served you to evil turns? And therefore, your good turns will never come in remembrance. Nay, believe it, you cannot be heard of God, while you cover any offence. And this I may say in general, even to the saints; any known sin given way

to, and entertained without controlment, without wrestling against it, hindereth the acceptation of your solemn approaches. "If your heart regard iniquity, shall God hear?" Psal. lxvi. 18. No, believe it, the least sin that you may judge at first venial, and then give it toleration and indulgence, shall separate between God's face and you. Your prayers are abomination, because of such an idol perked up in the heart beside God, that getteth the honour and worship due to him, and God must answer you according to it, Ezek. xix. 1, 3, 4. God will not be enquired of such as give allowance to sin, Ezek. xiv. 2, 3, 4. And, on the other hand, no sin, how great and heinous soever, can hinder God's gracious acceptance, when souls fly unto Jesus and turn their back upon sin, or giveth it no heart allowance. And to the multitude I say, all that you do or touch in a duty must be defiled, because your whole way is unclean, Hag. ii. 12, 13, 14. Think you to sin all the week through, and worship God on the Sabbath? Will you lie, swear, commit adultery, rail and curse, and come and stand before me, saith the Lord? No, certainly, you cannot be accepted; and will you hate reformation in your lives, and take his covenant in your mouth, and call yourselves by his name, "Christians?" And shall not God challenge you for that, as much as for your swearing, and cursing, and lying, &c.? Indeed the Lord putteth all in one roll, and you need not please yourselves in such things, Psal. l. 16. Jer. vii. 9, 10; for it is all one to you to go to tavern to drink, and come to the sermon,—to blaspheme God's name, and call on it, because the profanity of the one defileth the other, and the holiness of the other cannot make you holy.

Thirdly, The natural man's performances want the uprightness, reality, and sincerity that is required. It is but a painted tomb, full of rottenness within; it is but a shadow without substance, for he wanteth the spiritual part of worship, which God careth for, "who will be worshipped in spirit and truth," John iv. 24. Now, what is it that the most part of you can speak of, but an out-

side of some few duties, soon numbered. You hear the preaching, and your hearts wander about your business. You hear, and are not so much affected as you would be to hear some old story or fable told you. A stage play acted before this generation would move them more than the gospel doth; so that Christ may take up this lamentation, "We have piped to you, and you have not danced; lamented to you, and you have not mourned." You use to tell over some words in your prayers, and are not so serious in any approach to God, as in twenty other things of the world. Whatever you plead of your heart's rightness, and have recourse to it, when your conversation cannot defend you, yet your hearts are the worst of all, and have no uprightness towards God; for you know that what duties you go about, it is not from an inward principle, but from education or custom, or constraint. Are you upright, when you are forced, for fear of censure, to come here, or to pray at home? Is that sincerity and spiritual worship? And for the more polished and refined professors, you have this moth in your performances, and this fly to make your ointment to stink, that you do much to be seen of men. Therefore what little fervour of spirit is in secret duties, there you may measure your altitude and your life. And O! how wearisome, how lifeless are secret approaches! You would not have many errands to God, if you thought no body looked upon you. And for spirituality, it is a mystery in all men's practice. Who directeth his duty to God's glory? If you get some flash of liberty, you have your desire; but who misseth God's presence in duties, which a world will approve? Who go mourning as without the sun, even when you have the sunshine of ordinances, and walk in the light of them.

And, *Fourthly*, Though your performances had uprightness of heart going along, and much affection in them, yet all are filthy, because of want of faith in Jesus Christ. When you make your duties a covering of your sins, and think to satisfy God's justice for the rest of your faults,

by doing some point of your duty, then it cannot choose but be polluted in his sight. And this very thing was the cause of God's rejecting the Jews' righteousness, even because they did not look to the end of the mystery, Christ Jesus: did not pull by [*i. e.* draw aside] the vail of ceremonies, to see the immaculate Lamb of God slain for sin; and therefore doth the Lord so quarrel with them, as if he had never commanded them to do such things, Isa. i. 12, 13, "Who hath required these things at your hands? Bring no more vain oblations;" all is abomination. Even as God should say to you, when you come to the church, Who required you to come? Who commanded you to come to hear the preaching? What have you to do to pray? What warrant have you to communicate? All your praying, hearing, communicating, is abomination; who commanded you to do these things? Would you not think it a foolish question? You would soon answer, that God himself commanded you, and will he not let us do his bidding. Indeed this people, no doubt, have said so in their heart, and wondered what it meant. Nay, but here is the mystery,—you go about these commanded duties not in a commanded way, and so the obedience is but rebellion. You bring offerings and incense, and think that I am pacified when you bring alms,—you judge you have given me a recompence; whereas, all that is mine, and what pleasure have I in these things? I never appointed you sacrifices for this end, but to lead you into the knowledge of my Son, which is to be slain in the fulness of time, "and by one offering to perfect all." I commanded you to look on Jesus Christ slain, in the slain Lamb, and so to expect remission and salvation in him; but you never looked to more than the ceremony, and made that your saviour and mediator; and therefore it is all abomination. When you slay a lamb, and offer incense, it is all one thing as to cut off a dog's neck, or kill a man. So may the Lord say to this generation, I command you to pray, to repent and mourn for sin, to come and hear the word; but withal you must deny all these, and count yourselves unprofitable servants;

you must singly cast your soul's burden on Christ Jesus. But now, saith the Lord, who commanded your repentance? For when you sit down to pray, or come in public to confess sin before the congregation, you think you are washen. When you have said, you have sinned, and if you come to the length of tears and sorrow, O then, sure you are pardoned, though in the meantime you have no thought of Jesus Christ, and know no use of him! Therefore, saith the Lord, who commanded you to do these things? You think you have satisfied for your sin, when you pay a penalty; but who requireth this? I will reckon with you for these, as well as the sins you pray and mourn for, because you do not singly look to Christ Jesus. Now, if he had never come to the world, your ground of confidence would not fail you; for you might have prayed as much, mourned and confessed, and promised amendment; and so you pass by "the Son of God, in whom only the Father is well pleased." Think, then, upon this,—whatever you make your righteousness, there needeth no other thing to make it filthy, but to make it your righteousness. Your confidence in your good heart to God, prayer day and night, and such like, is the most loathsome thing in God's eyes; except you come to this, to count your prayers, as God doth, among your oaths; to count your solemn duties among profane scandalous actions, as the Lord doth, Isa. i. and lxvi. 3, then certainly, you do adorn yourselves with them, and cover your nakedness of other faults with such leaves as Adam did, but you shall be more discovered. Your garment is as filthy as that it hideth, even because you make that use of it to hide your sin, and cover it.

Next, The Lord's children have no ground of boasting either, from their own righteousness; the holiest saint on earth must abhor himself in dust and ashes, and holy Isaiah joineth himself in with a profane people. When he cometh to God to be justified, he cometh among the ungodly,—he bringeth no righteousness with him, he cometh in among them that work not. Now, you shall find good

ground why it must be so; 1. There are ordinarily many blemishes in our holiest actions, spots on our cleanest garments; often formality eateth up the life of duties, and presenteth a body without a soul in it. You sit down to pray out of custom, morning and evening; and if there were no more to prove it, this may suffice. When pray you but at such times? You have an ordinary, and go not by it. No advantage is taken of providence, no necessity constraineth when occasion offereth; and so it is like the world's appointed hours. How great deadness and indisposition creepeth in, so that it is the ordinary complaint; yea, all prayers filled with it, scarcely any room for other petitions, because of the want of frame for prayer itself. The word is heard as a discourse, and on whom hath it operation to stir up affections, either of joy or of trembling? Christians, you come not to hear God speak, and so you meet with empty ordinances—God is not in them. How often do crooked and sinister ends creep in, and bias the spirit! Men ask, to spend on their lusts, and to satisfy their own ambition. Some would have more grace to be more eminent, or to have a more pleasant life; and this is but the seeking to spend on your lusts. If affection run in the channel of a duty, it is often muddy, and runneth through our corruptions: liberty in duties is principled with carnal affections and self-love. Will not often the wind of applause in company fill the sails, and make your course swifter and freer than when you are alone? And often much love to a particular object maketh more in seeking it. And that which is a moth to eat up and consume all our duties is conceit and self-confidence in going about them, and attributing to ourselves after them. It is but very rare, that any man both acteth from Jesus Christ as the principal, and also putteth over his work on Christ singly as the end. Alas! too often do men draw out of Christ's fulness, and raise up their own glory upon it, and adorn themselves with the spoils of his honour; for we use to pray from a habit of it, and

go to it as men acquainted with it, and when we get any satisfaction to our own minds, O how doth the soul return on itself, and goeth not forward as it goeth! It is so well pleased with itself, when it getteth liberty to approach, that it doth not put all over on Jesus, and take shame to itself. As long as there is a body of death within, holiness cannot be pure and unmixed; our duties run through a dirty channel, and cannot chuse but contract filth. While sin lodgeth under one roof so near grace, grace must be in its exercise marred; and therefore the holy apostle must cry, Rom vii. 19, "The good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do," And verse 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

2. Though there were not such blemishes and spots in the face of our righteousness, yet it is here in a state of imperfection, and but in its minority, and so must be filthy in the Lord's sight. It was perfect holiness according to the perfect rule of God's law, that Adam was to be justified by, according to the covenant of works; exact obedience, not one wanting,—or else all that can be done, came short of righteousness: one breach bringeth the curse on. All obedience (if there be a failing in a little) will not bring the blessing on: he that doth all, liveth; and he that doth not all, is cursed. And therefore Christians, all you do cannot commend your persons to God, for if he examine you by the rule of the law, O how short will the holiest come! Paul and Isaiah dare not come into such a reckoning; neither is all obeyed, nor any in the measure and manner commanded. And therefore, you might cry down all your performances, when you could challenge them with no particular blot, with this—all is short of the command, and infinitely short. I have been aiming at holiness so long, I have stretched out my strength, and what have I attained? It may be, I have outstripped equals, and there seemeth to be some distance between me and others; nay, but the command is unspeakably more before me than I am before others. I have reached but a

grain weight of the eternal weight of grace, and I must forget it, and stand before God, as if I had lost mind of duties, appear in his presence as if I had attained nothing; for the length that is before my hand drowneth up all attainments.

3. Nay, but put the case if man were perfect, "Yet should he not know his soul, but despise his life: the Lord putteth no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly, and the heavens are not clean in his sight; how then must man be abominable, that hath his foundation in the dust, and drinketh in iniquity like water? How should God magnify him? Or he be righteous that is born of a woman?" Job xxv. 4, 6; xv. 14, 15; and iv. 18, 19. Job was a great length in the sight of his own vileness and God's holiness, when he saw this, "Though I were perfect, yet I would not know it, but despise it; I would not answer him, though I were righteous," chap. ix. 14, 15, 21. So unspeakably pure and clean is his holiness, that all created holiness hath a spot in it before his, and evanisheth, as the stars disappear when the sun riseth, which seem something in the darkness. The angels' holiness, the heaven's glory, is nothing to Him, "before whom the nations are as nothing;" so that it is all the wonder of the world, that ever God stooped so far below himself, even to righteous Adam, as to make such a covenant with him, to account him righteous in obedience. "What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? When I look to the heavens, and the sun, the work of thine hands, Lord, what is man?" What is innocent man in his integrity, that thou shouldst magnify him, to give him a place to stand before thee, magnify him to be a party-contractor with thy glorious Majesty? Psalm viii. 4—6. But now, when this covenant is broken, it is become impossible to a son of Adam ever to stand before God in his perfection, for, "How should man be righteous that is born of a woman?" Job xiv. 15. Since we once sinned, how should our righteousness ever come in remembrance? Therefore hath God chosen another way to cover man's wickedness

and righteousness both, with his own righteousness, his Son's divine human righteousness, which is so suited in his infinite wisdom for us. It is a man's righteousness, that it may agree with men, and be a fit garment to cover them; it is God's righteousness, that it may be beautiful in God's eyes, for he seeth his own image in it. And it is not the created inherent righteousness of saints glorified, that shall be their upper garment, that shall be their heaven and glory-suit, so to speak. They will not glory in this, but only in the Lamb's righteousness for evermore. Saint-holiness must have a covering above, for it cannot cover our nakedness; and all the songs of those that follow the Lamb make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. The Lamb is the light and sun of the city, the Lamb is the temple of it; in a word, he is all that is beautiful and glorious. Every saint hath put on the Lord Jesus, and is perfect through his comeliness. At least, if the holiness of spirits of just men made perfect, be the glorious habit above; yet all the beauty and glory of it is from Christ Jesus, whose image it is, and the Spirit whose work it is. It shall be still true, all—all our righteousness, as ours, is filthy, and all holiness, as it hath a relation to us, cannot please God. It must be spotted before his pure eyes; but only it is accepted and clean, as it is Christ's and the Spirit's, as it is his own garment put upon us, and his own comeliness making us perfect. It is not so much the inherent cleanness of the saints' robes that maketh them beautiful in his eyes, as this, "That they are washed in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. vii. 14.

Now, from all this we would speak a word to two sorts of you. There is one great point of religion that is the principal and foundation of all other, even free justification by faith in Jesus, without our own righteousness; and the most part stumble here in the entry. It is the greatest obstruction of souls coming to Christ Jesus, even the ignorant and blind conceit and fancy that almost every man hath of himself and his own performances; the world will not make many believe the half of the evil of

themselves that is spoken in the word. If you have a general conviction of sinfulness and misery, yet you think to help it. If you sin, you use to make an amends, run to your prayers and repentance to give God a recompence, and satisfy your own consciences. Speak now, is not this the way you think to be saved? I shall do what I can, pray and mourn for sin, and what I am not able to do, God must forgive; you will do all you are able or can, and God's mercy must come in to supply the want of your righteousness. But this is to put a new piece of cloth in an old garment, to make the rent worse. Many of you have no other ground of confidence in the world, nothing to answer the challenge of conscience or satisfy justice, but this,—I repent, I am sorry, I mourn, I shall amend, I resolve never to do the like again. Now then from this ground, we would declare unto you, in the Lord's name, you are yet unclean, both in persons and actions unjustified, because you have no other covering but your own duties and performances; and let these be examined, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and they will be found light. "All your righteousness," saith the Lord, "is filthiness;" you are unclean, you cannot deny, both by birth and education,—you have often defiled yourselves with sins, you must confess. Now, I ask you, How will you cover that uncleanness and nakedness? How will you hide it from God's eyes and your own conscience? You know no way but this,—I will pray, I will repent and amend. So then you cover yourself with prayer, with sorrow and tears, and a resolution of amending. This, then, is all your covering and ornament,—something done by you, as many will make the wings of two good works stretch themselves out so far, as to cover and hide a multitude of offences between them. Therefore I declare, in the name of the Lord Jesus, unto you, whose conscience must go along in the acknowledgment and owning of your case, that you have covered yourselves with your own righteousness, that you have taken as filthy rags to cover your nakedness and sin with, as your sins are, and so you have made an addition

to your uncleanness, you are more unclean by your prayers and repentance than before; and so God is of more pure eyes than to look graciously on such as you are. You have gone about to establish your own righteousness, and have not known the righteousness of God, and so you come short of it; you are yet persons in a state of enmity,—God is your judge, you are rebels. It concerns you much to heed this well, to judge of your own actions and persons as God judgeth of them, for if God shall judge one way, and you judge another way, you may be far mistaken in the end. If you have so good an opinion of yourselves and your duties, that you can plead interest in God for them, and absolve yourselves from such grounds; and if God have not the same judgment, but rather think as evil of your prayers as of your cursing, and abhor the thing that satisfieth you, will it not be dreadful in the end? For his judgment shall stand, and you will succumb in judgment, since you crossed God's mind. Therefore we would have you solidly drink in this principle of religion, That man is so unclean, and God so abhorreth him, that whatever he doth or can do, it cannot make him righteous; that no good action can make him acceptable, and take away the uncleanness of the evil actions; and that any sinful action taketh away all the cleanness of the good actions. Once believe this,—if I should sweat out my life in serving God, and never rise off my knees, if I should give my body to the fire for the truth, if I should melt away in tears for sin, all this is but filthy rags, and I can never be accepted of God for all that, but the matter of my condemnation groweth;—if I justify myself my own mouth proves me perverse: God needeth no more but my good deeds to condemn me for, in all justice; and therefore it is a thing impossible,—I will never put forth a hand, or open a mouth upon that account any more. I will serve God, because it is my duty, but life I will not expect by my service; when I have done all, it is wholly mercy that I am accepted, My good works shall never come in remembrance; I resolve to be found, not having my own righteousness. I will appear among the ungodly

sinners, as one that hath no righteousness, that I may be justified only by faith in Jesus Christ. I say, drink in this truth, and let it settle in your hearts, and then we would hear numbers cry, "O what shall I do to be saved?"

Now, as for you who have fled unto Christ's righteousness only, and have cast away your own as dung and dross, as filthy rags; as you have done right in the point of justification, judge so likewise after it. We would exhort you to judge so of your best actions that are the fruits of the Spirit, judge so of them as you have a hand in them.

"All our righteousness:" Mark, Isaiah, a holy prophet, joineth himself in with the multitude. And the truth is, the more holiness, the more humility and self-abasing; for what is holiness, I pray you, but self-denial, the abasing of the creature, and exalting of Christ Jesus. This is the cross that the saints must all bear, "Deny yourself, and follow me." Grace doth not swell men above others, it is gifts, such as knowledge, that puffeth up; charity or love puffeth not up. Men are naturally high-minded, for pride was the first sin of Adam, and grace cometh to level men, to make the high mountains valleys for Christ's chariot; it maketh men stoop low to enter the door of the kingdom. Therefore, if you have attained any measure beyond others, if you would prove it real grace and holiness, do not exalt yourselves above others, be not high-minded, come down and sit among the ungodly, among the unclean, and let not grace given diminish the low estimation of yourself in yourself. There is a growing, that is but a fancy and men's conceit; when men grow above ordinances, above other Christians, and can see none or few Christians but themselves, such a growth is not real. It is but fancy, it is but swelling and wind, and must be pricked to let it out. A holy prophet came in among an unclean people; he did not say, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." Such a man as can find no Christian about him, even though to the judgment of all others, they seek God more than he, such a man hath not

real solid grace,—his holiness is profane holiness, and proud holiness; for true holiness is humble holiness, and in honour preferreth others.

There is a great fault among those who have fled to Christ's righteousness in justification, that they use to come forth from duties, as a stomach from a honeycomb. Ofttimes we make our liberty and access to God the ground of our acceptation; and according to the ebbing and flowing of our inherent righteousness, so doth the faith and confidence of justification ebb and flow. Christians, this ought not to be; in so doing, you make your own righteousness your righteousness before God; for when the unsatisfaction in the point of duty maketh you question your interest so often, is not the satisfaction of your minds in duties made the ground of your pleading interest? Give you liberty and access, you can believe any thing; remove it, and you can believe nothing. Certainly this is a sandy foundation,—you ought to build nothing on performances, you should be as vile in your own eyes, and think your nakedness as open, when you come nearest God, when you have most liveliness, as when he hideth his face, and duty withereth. Will filthy rags be your ornament? No, Christians. Be more acquainted with the unspotted righteousness of the immaculate Lamb of God, and find as great necessity of covering your cleanest duties with it, as your foulest faults, and thus shall you be kept still humble and vile in your own eyes, and have continual employment for Christ Jesus. Your best estate should not puff you up, and your worst estate should not cast you down; therefore be much in the search of the filthiness of your holy actions. This were a spiritual study, a noble discovery to unbowel your duties, to divide them, and to give unto God what is God's, and take unto yourselves what is your own. The discovery of filthiness in them needeth not hinder his praise; and the discovery of grace in them needeth not mar your shame. God hath most glory when we have most shame; these two grow in just proportion,—so much is taken from God as is given to the creature.

Thirdly, We would also press you from this ground to long much to be clothed upon with immortality, to put off the filthy rags of time and earth-righteousness, and to be clothed upon with the white robes of the righteousness of the saints. As you would dwell near the fountain here, and be still washing your garments, and offering all your sacrifices in him who sanctifieth all, so would you pant and thirst for this spotless garment of glory. Glory is nothing but perfect holiness, holiness washen and made clean in the Lamb's blood. Your rags are for the prison and for sojourning; when you come to your Father's house, your raiment shall be changed. Therefore, Christians, every one of you aspire higher. Sit not down in attainments; forget what is behind, and press forward. Let perfect holiness be in your eye and purpose, sit not behind it. All our time-duties have much filthiness, —long for the pure stream that waters the city above. Grace is not in its native place, it is corrupted and mixed here: heaven is the own element of it, and there is grace without mixture. Undervalue all your performances, till you be above, where that which is in part shall be done away, where no unclean thing entereth.

Fourthly, This likewise holdeth out to you a continual necessity of washing. You must take up house beside the fountain opened in the house of David; and never look on any piece of inherent righteousness, but see a necessity of dipping it in the Lamb's blood. And therefore should you pray always in Christ's name, that the prayer which, of itself, would be cast as dung on our face, may have a sweet savour from him. Cover your holiness with Christ's righteousness, and make mention of it only.

XVII.

Isa. lxiv. 6.—And we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Here they join the punishment with the deserving cause, their uncleanness and their iniquities, and so take it upon them, and subscribe to the righteousness of God's dealing.

We will say this much in general—*First*, Nobody needeth quarrel God for his dealing, "He will always be justified when he is judged." If the Lord deal more sharply with you than with others, you may judge there is a difference between your condition and theirs, as well as in the Lord's dispensation, even as this people do, ver. 5, 6. It is a strange saying, Lam. iii. 31, "The Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." That is, as we conceive, the Lord hath not such pleasure in trampling on men, as he might do on the dust of his feet. Though he be absolute sovereign Lord of the creature, and men be but as the dust of his feet, and he may do with his own what he pleaseth, and none ask, what dost thou? yet the Lord useth not to walk according to his own absoluteness,—he hath another ordinary rule whereby he worketh, a rule of justice and equity. Especially in the punishing of men, he useth not to afflict men for his pleasure, as tyrants use to destroy their people. The Lord exerciseth his sovereignty another way, and if he be absolute and unlimited in any thing, it is in shewing mercy on men. But in judgment, there may be still some reason gotten for it in the creature beside the will of God; so that, to speak with reverence of his majesty, strokes are often drawn out of his hands. He getteth so much provocation ere he strike, and holdeth off so long,—threateneth, and giveth warning thus before strokes, as if it were against his will to lay on, as if his heart were broken with us.

Secondly, If men knew themselves and their own sin-

fulness, they would not challenge God with unrighteousness, but put their mouth in the dust, and keep silence. And it is from this ground, that this people do not charge God. Sin is of such infinite desert and demerit, because against infinite majesty, that God cannot go beyond it in punishment; and therefore Jeremiah, when he is wading out of the deep waters of sore temptation and sad discouragement, pitcheth and casteth anchor at this solid ground, "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed," Lam. iii. 22. What, do I mean thus to charge God, as if he dealt rigorously? No, no: It is his mercy that a remnant is left,—our strokes are not pure justice, our cup is mixed, mercy is the greatest part. Whatever is behind utter destruction, whatever is below the desert of sin, which is hell and damnation, all this must be reckoned up to mercy. That I am yet alive, and so may have hope, this is mercy, "For why should a living man complain?" ver. 39. That a rod is come to awake us out of security, this is mercy, for we might have slept to death. And this wholesome counsel got Job of his friends,—to stay his murmuring and grudging at God's dispensations, Job xi. 6. Why dost thou complain, Job? Know but thy sins, and there shall be no room for complaint. Look but unto God's secrets of wisdom, and his law, and see it is double to what you have known,—your obligation is infinitely more than you thought upon, and then how great and numberless must iniquities be? Know, therefore, saith Zophar, God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquities deserve. God exacteth not according to law, he craveth not according to the obligation, but bids write down fifty in his bill of affliction, when an hundred are written in our bill of deserving. So then, complain not,—it is mercy that life is saved. Are you men and living men? Wonder at this, and wonder not that you are not wealthy, are not honourable, seeing you are sinners: all that came on Jerusalem maketh not Ezra think God out of bounds, chap. ix. 13. As we are less than the least of God's mercies, and all our goodness deserveth none of them, so is

the least sin greater than the greatest of all his judgments, and deserveth still more. Nay, if there were no more but original corruption common to men, and the filthiness that accompanieth men's good actions, yet is God righteous in punishing severely, and this people acknowledge it so. You use to inquire what sin hath such a man done, when so terrible judgments come on? Nay, enquire no more;—he is a sinner, and it is mercy there is not more, and it is strange mercy that it is not so with you also. You use to speak foolishly when God's hand is upon you: I hope I have my punishment here, I hope to suffer here for my sins. Poor souls, if God make you suffer for sins, it will be another matter. Though now your punishment be above your strength and patience, yet it is below your sin. As sin hath all evil in it, so must hell have all punishment in it. The torment of the gravel, racking with the stone, and such like, are but play to hell,—these are but drops of that ocean that you must drink out, and you shall go out of one hell into a worse; eternity is the measure of its continuance, and the degrees of itself are answerable to its duration. There is much impatience even among God's children under the rod; you vex and torment yourselves, and do well to be angry. Any piece of thwarting dispensation, that goes cross to your humour and inclination, embitters your spirit against God, and maketh you go cross to his providence: how often do your hearts say, Why am I thus? What aileth the Lord at me? But, Christians, learn to study your own deservings, and stop your mouth with that, that you may not speak against heaven. If you knew sin well, you would not wonder at judgments, you would rather wonder that you are out of hell. Know what right God hath over you, and how little use he maketh of it against you. When you repine at a little, shall it not be righteousness with God to exact more, and let you know your deserving better. He that thinketh it rigour in God to exact fifty, it is justice that God crave an hundred. If the law require forty stripes, and he give but one, will you not ra-

ther commend and proclaim his clemency, than speak of his cruelty? Wonder that God hath spared us so long. Sin is come to great maturity. As pride is said to blossom and bud into a rod, so all sins are blossomed and budded into the very harvest, that the sickle may be put in. If we should have cities desolate, and our land consumed; if we should take up Jeremiah's lamentation, and our case be made parallel to theirs, we have then been punished less than our iniquities deserved.

There are some godless people so black-mouthed as to speak against heaven when God correcteth them; they follow the counsel of Job's wife, "Curse God and die." If God but touch them a little in that which is dearest unto them, they "kick against the pricks," and run hard-heads with God. As we have known some foolish women, when their only child hath been removed, blaspheme, saying, What can God do more to me?—let him do what he can! O madness and wickedness of men! Cannot God do more when he casteth them into hell? Thou shalt acknowledge that it is more. Some have left off to seek God and turned profane, because of the Lord's correction; but you should know that all that is here is but arles, [*i. e.* an earnest of what is to come]. If God had done his worst, you might think yourselves out of his common; nay, but he hath yet more to do, the full sum is to be payed. It were therefore wisdom yet to make supplication to thy judge.

But, *thirdly*, Sins and iniquities have a great influence in the decay of nations and persons, and change of their outward condition, when it is joined with the wind of God's displeasure. The calamity of this people is set down in excellent terms, alluding to a tree in the fall of the leaf. We, saith he, were once in our land as a green tree busked [*i. e.* adorned] round about with leaves and fruit: our church and state was in a flourishing condition; at least, nothing was wanting to make outward splendour and glory. We were immovable in our own land; as David said in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved," so did

we dream of eternity in earthly Canaan. But now, Lord, we are like a tree in the fall of the leaf: sin hath obstructed the influence of heaven, hath drawn away the sap of thy presence from among us, so that we did fade as a leaf before its fall; we were prepared so by our sins for judgment,—visible draughts and prognostics of it were to be read upon the condition and frame of all spirits and people; and then did our iniquities raise the storm of thy indignation, and that like a whirlwind hath blown the withering leaves off the tree, hath driven us out of our own land, and scattered us among strangers. Sin and uncleanness and the filthiness of our righteousness prepared us for the storm, made us light matter that could resist no judgment, made us matter combustible; and then iniquities and sin rising up to iniquities, cometh to such a degree, hath accomplished the judgment, put fire among us, made us as the birk [*i. e.* birch] in Yule even.*

First, It is familiar in the Scripture that people in a prosperous condition are compared unto "a green tree flourishing," Psal. xxxvii. 35. The wicked's prospering is like a green bay tree spreading himself in power, spreading out his arms, as it were, over more lands, to conquer them, over more people, to subject them. And this is often the temptation of the godly, and so doth the Lord himself witness of this people, Jer. xi. 16, "I have called thy name a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit."

* It was customary in Scotland, as elsewhere, though the custom has now completely fallen into desuetude, to celebrate Yule or Christmas with various superstitious observances. One of these was the Christmas fire. In farm houses the servants were accustomed to lay by a large knotty block of wood, called the "Yule clog," to be burnt on that occasion; and it may well be supposed, that a block of dry birk or birch was well adapted for this purpose. The phrase, however, "as bare as the birks at Yule-e'en," was formerly a common proverb in Scotland; and as Binning, a few lines above, was alluding to the tree being stripped of its leaves, and now to its combustibility, he might have had nothing before his mind at this time but the ordinary proverb.

This was once their name, though it be now changed. Now they are called a fading withering tree without both leaves and fruit. Now their place doth not so much as know them, they are removed as in a moment, Psal. xxxvii. 36. And this comparison giveth us to understand something of the nature of human glory and pomp. The fairest and most beautiful excellency in the world, the prosperity of nations and people, is but like the glory of a tree in the spring or summer. Yea, the Scripture useth to undervalue it more than so, and the voice commandeth to cry, Isa. xl. 6, 7, 8, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field: the one withereth, and the other fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." A tree hath some stability in it, but the flower of the field is but of a month or a week's standing; nay, of one day's standing, for in the morning the grass is green, and the sun scorcheth it ere night, so that one sun's course shall see it both growing green and fading. So is the goodliness, the very perfection, the quintessence, so to speak, and the abstract of creatures' perfections. Outward accommodation in a world is as fading a thing as the flower is, as smoke is; it is so vanishing that it bides but a puff of his breath to blow it to nothing. Job hath a strange expression, "Thou lookest upon me, and I am not," Job vii. 8. The Lord needeth no more but stare on the most durable creature, and look it not only out of countenance, but also into its first nothing,—look it out of glory, out of being; and therefore you should not trust in those uncertain things, that can take wings and leave you. When you have accommodation outwardly to your mind, do not build your nest in it: these leaves of prosperity will not cover you always: there is a time when they will fall. Nations have their winter and their summer, persons have them likewise; as these must change in nature, so must they do in their lot. Heaven only is one day, one spring perpetually blossoming and bringing forth fruit. There is the tree of life that bringeth forth fruit every month, that hath both spring

and harvest all the year over. Christians, sit not down under the green tree of worldly prosperity: if you do, the leaves will come down about you; the gourd you trust in may be eaten up in a night: your winter will come on so as you shall forget the former days as if they had never been. We desire you to be armed for changes: are not matters in the kingdom still going about? All things are subject to revolution and change, and every year hath its own summer and winter, so hath it pleased the Lord "to set the one over against the other, that man might find nothing after him," Eccl. vii. 14. Therefore we would have you cast your accounts so as the former days of darkness may return, and the land be covered with mourning-clothes.

But would you know what is the original of the creatures' vanity, what is the moth that eats up the glory and goodliness of creatures' enjoyments? Here it is—"sin and iniquities." It was sin that first subjected the creation to vanity, Rom. viii. 19, 20. This inferior world was to have been a durable house for an immortal soul, but sin made man mortal, and the world corruptible, and from this proceeds all the tempests and disorders that seem to be in the creation. It is this still—it is sin that raiseth the storm of the Lord's wrath, which bloweth away the withered leaves of men's enjoyments. Sin drieth up all the sap and sweetness of the creature comforts,—it maketh the leaves of the tree wither, dries the sap away to the root, hindereth the influence of God's blessing to come through the veins of worldly prosperity. For what is the virtue and sap of creatures? It is even God's blessing; and therefore the bread nourisheth not, but the word and command of God, Matt. iii. 4. That is a right unto the creatures by Jesus Christ, when possession of them is entered into by prayer and thanksgiving, for all right is sanctified by these, and "it is the iniquities of men that separateth between God and them," Isa. lix. 2. And when God is separated and divided from enjoyments, they must needs be empty shells and husks, no kernel in

them, for "God filleth all in all, is all in all;" and remove him and you have nothing,—your meat and drink is no blessing, your table is a snare, your pleasures and laughter have sadness in them. At least, they are like the vanishing blaze of thorns under a pot; and therefore, when God is angry for sin, men's beauty consumeth as before the moth, Psalm xxxix. 11. When God beginneth to shew himself terrible, because of sin, poor man, though of late spreading his boughs out, yet all falleth, and, like ice, melteth as before the sun, which just now seemed as solid as stone. O but David was sensible of this, and could speak from much experience, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4, "The anger of the Lord did eat him up, and dried his moisture." It might be read in his countenance,—all the world could not content him, all the showers of creatures dropping fatness could not keep sap in him, God's displeasure scorcheth so; nay, is within him, that no hiding place is to be found in the world, no shadow of a rock among all the creatures in such a weary land. Moses and the people knew this well, Psal. xc. 5—9. The Lord's displeasure carried them away, as a flood coming down carrieth all headlong with it; it scorched them and made them wither as grass. When God setteth iniquities before him, that which is the soul's secret beginneth to imprint it in visible characters on the rod, and writeth his sin on his punishment; then no wonder that days be spent in vanity and grief, since they are past over in his wrath, Job xiii. 25. Then doth a soul loathe its dainty meat, and then doth the ox low over his fodder. Meat is laid before and he cannot touch it, because of the terrors of the Almighty; and that which before he would not once touch, would not enter into terms of communing with, as the Lord's threatenings, he must now sit down and eat them up as his meat, how sorrowful soever, Job vi. 5, 6, 7.

But, *secondly*, when sin hath prepared a man for judgment, then, if iniquity be added to sin, this raiseth the storm, and kindleth the fire to consume the combustible

matter. When sin hath given many blows, by preparatory corrections, at the root of a man's pleasure and credit, it will at length bring on a fatal stroke that shall drive the tree to the ground. There are some preparatory judgments, and some consummatory; some wither the leaf, and some blow it quite off; some make men like the harvest, ripe to put the sickle of judgment into it. The corruption of a land, the universality of it, and formality in worshipping of God, ripeneth a land for the harvest of judgment—exposeth it to any storm—leaveth it open to the Lord's wrath, so that there is nothing to hold his hand and keep off the stroke; but when the wind ariseth, and iniquities have made it tempestuous, then who may stand? It will sweep away nations and people as a flood, and make their place not to know them, so that there shall be neither leaf nor branch left. There is often a great calm with great provocations, and iniquities cry, "Peace, peace!" But when once the cry of it is gone up to heaven, and hath engaged God's anger against a people or person, then it raiseth a whirlwind that taketh all away. Now, all this belongeth to you,—we told you the acknowledgment of sin was yours already; and a wonder it is, that the complaint is not ours also. Always [*i. e.* nevertheless] this ought to be an admonition and example to us, on whom the ends of the world are fallen. Therefore we would declare this unto you, that sin and iniquities have judgment in the tail. Now you sit at peace, every one in his own dwelling, and spread forth your branches; but is there not much uncleanness among you? We would have you trouble your carnal peace and security; trouble your ease with thoughts of this. And we have ground to give this warning, because, if there were no more but the iniquity of our holy things—the formality of our service—the commonness of spirit in worship, this might be enough to raise the storm. You know not for what reasons to be afraid of judgment. Look but on original corruption; look on the defilement of your religious actions, and then find ground sufficient of fading

away. Though now you sit still, and seem to be so settled, as you would never be moved; you dream of an eternity here—you cleave in your hearts to your houses and lands—you stick as fast to the world, and will not part with it, as a leaf to a tree; yet behold the wind of the Lord may arise, that shall drive you away; take your soul from these things, and then whose shall they be? If you will not fear temporal judgments, yet I pray you fear eternal—fear hell. May not the Lord shake you off this tree of time, and take you out of the land of the living, to receive your portion? There is not only an universal deadness of spirit on the land, but a profane spirit,—iniquities, abominable sins, abound. Every congregation is overgrown with scandals; and for you, none may more justly complain. We are all unclean: sin is not in corners, but men declare their sin as Sodom; sin is come to the maturity—defection and apostacy is the temper of all spirits; and, above all, the general contempt and slighting of this glorious gospel, is the iniquity of Scotland, so that we wonder that the withered leaves yet stick to; that the storm is not yet raised, and we blown away. Now, you are like stones—your hearts as adamants, and cannot be moved with his threatenings; the voice of the Lord's word doth not once move you. You sin and are not afraid; nay, but when God's anger shall join with iniquity, and the voice of his rod and displeasure roar, this shall make the mountains to tremble, the rocks to move, and how much more shall it drive away a leaf? You seem now mountains; but when God shall plead, you shall be like the chaff driven to and fro. O how easy a matter shall it be to God to blow a man out of his dwelling-place! Sin hath prepared you for it; he needeth no more but blow by his Spirit, or look upon you, and you will not be. You who now are lofty and proud, and maintain yourselves against the word, when you come to reckon with God, and he entereth into judgment, you shall not stand—"you will consume as before the moth;" your hearts will fail you—"who may abide the day of his coming?" It will be so terrible, and so much the

more terrible, that you never dreamed of it. If the example of this people will not move you, do but cast your eyes on Ireland, who all do fade as a leaf, and their iniquities have taken them away out of their own land. Will neither the seeing of the eye, nor the hearing of the ear teach you? What security do you promise to yourselves? Have not we sinned as much as they? Were not they his people as well as we? Certainly, since God waiteth longer on you, the stroke must be the greater: provoked patience must turn fury. If you would then prevent this people's complaint, go about such a serious acknowledgment of your sins, "Search your ways, and turn again to the Lord." And let not every man sit down in a general notion of sin, but unbowel it until you see uncleanness; go up to the fountain-head, original corruption; go down to all the streams, even the iniquity of holy things. Let every man be particular in the search of his own provocations personal; and every one be public in the general sins of the land, that you may confess out of knowledge and sense, "We are all unclean," &c.

XVIII.

Isa. lxiv. 7.—And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee, &c.

They go on in the confession of their sins. Many a man hath soon done with that: a general notion of sin is the highest advancement in repentance that many attain to. You may see here sin and judgment mixed together in their complaint. They do not so fix their eyes upon their desolate estate of captivity, as to forget their provocations. Many a man would spend more affection, and be more pathetic in the expression of his misery, when it is pungent, than he can do when he speaketh of his sins. We would observe, from the nature of this confession, something to be a pattern of your repentance. And it is this: When the Spirit convinceth, and men are serious in repentance, then the soul is more searching, more universal, more particular in acknowledgment of sins. These are characters

of the Spirit's work. *First*, The Spirit discovereth unto men, not only sin, but the loathsomeness of sin: its heinous nature; how offensive it is to God's holy eye. Many of you know abundance of evil deeds, and call them sins; but you have never taken up sin's ugly face, never seen it in the glass of the holy law, uncleanness itself, because you do not abhor yourselves. Poor and low thoughts of God make mean and shallow thoughts of sin. You would be as Job, vile, chap. xl. 4; and "abhor yourselves in dust and ashes," chap. xlii. 6. As God's holiness grew great in your eyes, sin's uncleanness would grow proportionably, Isa. vi. 3, 5. And here your repentance halteth in the very entry.

But, *secondly*, The Spirit discovereth not only the uncleanness of men's natures, and leadeth them up to original corruption, but the Spirit also leadeth men along all the streams, not only those that break out, but those which go under ground, and have a more secret and subtle conveyance. It concludeth not only open breaches of the command under filthiness, but also all a man's own righteousness, though never so refined; it concludeth it also a defiled garment, so that the soul can look no where but see sin and uncleanness in its ornaments and duties. And thus it appeareth before God without such a covering, openeth up its soul, hideth not sin with the covering of duties, but seeth a necessity of another covering for all. Now, therefore, let the most part of you conclude, that you have never yet gotten your eyes open to see sin or confess it, because, when you sit down to count your sins, there are many things that you call not sin,—you use not to reckon your praying and repentance among sins. Nay, because you have so much confidence in your repentance and confession, you have never repented. You must see a necessity of a covering of Christ's righteousness above all; faith in Jesus must cover repentance and itself both, with the glorious object of it. But, alas! how soon are many at an end of confession! some particular gross actions may come in remembrance, but no more. Sum up all your confessions; they have never yet pitched

on the thousandth part of your guiltiness, no, not in kinds, let be in number.

But, *thirdly*, The spirit convinceth spiritually and particularly both; it convinceth of spiritual sins, as we said last, of the iniquity of holy things, and especially of the most substantial duties, faith and prayer, John xvi. 8, 9. There are not many of you have come this length, to see your want of prayer. No, your own words do witness against you, for you use to say, I pray day and night, I believe in God with all my heart. Now therefore, out of your own mouth shall you be condemned. When the Spirit convinceth you of sin, you will see no faith, no prayer at the first opening of the eyes. But I add, there is no true confession but it is particular: the Spirit useth not to bewilder men's spirits in a general notion only, and a wide field of unknown sins. And such are many of your convictions. You mourn for sin, as you say, and yet you cannot condescend on a particular that burdeneth your conscience; you grant you have many sins, but sit down to count them, and there is a short count of them. Now, do you not reflect back upon former humiliations in public, and former acknowledgments of sins in private? Do you not yet return upon your own hearts to lay home this sad challenge, I have never repented, I do not yet repent? Must not all your solemn approaches be iniquity and abomination, while your souls are not afflicted for sin, while you can see so few sins? The fasting days of Scotland will be numbered in the roll of the greatest provocations, because there is no real and spiritual conviction of sin among us; custom hath now taken away the solemnity, and there remaineth nothing but the very name. Is this the fast that the Lord chooseth? No, believe it, this shall add to your provocation, and rather hasten lingering judgment, than keep it off. We would beseech you this day, pray for pardon of former abused fasts. If you had no more to mourn for, this might spend the day and our spirits both, and exhaust all our present supplications,—even the wall of partition that stands between God and

Scotland, which all our former solemn humiliation hath built up, a great deal higher than other sins could reach.

"There is none that calleth upon thy name." Did not this people make many prayers, Isa. i. 15, before the captivity? And did they not cry, which noteth some fervency in it? And fast a little before it in Jeremiah's time, chap. xi. 11, and xiv. 12; in the time of it, Ezek. viii. 18. Mic. iii. 4. Zech. vii. 3. How then is it that the prophet, now on the watch-tower looking round about him to take up the people's condition, and being led by the Spirit so far as to the case of the captives in Babel, can find no prayer, no calling? And was not Daniel so too? Dan. ix 13. Lo, then here is the construction that the Spirit of God putteth on many prayers and fastings in a land, "There is none calleth on thy name;" there is none that prayeth faithfully and fervently, few to count upon that prayeth any. It may be there are many public prayers, but who prayeth in secret, and mourneth to God alone? There are many prayers, but the inscription is, "To the unknown God," to a nameless god; your praying is not a calling on his name, as a known God and revealed in the word.

This, then, we would say unto you, that there may be many prayers in your account, and none in God's. There are many prayers of men that God counteth no more of, than the howling of a dog. *First*, The cry of men's practices is often louder than their prayers, and goeth up to heaven, that the cry of prayer cannot be heard. When men's conversation is flat contrary to their supplications, supplication is no calling on his name, but charming rather. Sodom's abominations had a cry up to God, Gen. xviii. 21. So Abel's blood had a cry for vengeance, which Cain's prayers could not outcry. Thus the Lord would not hear many prayers, Isa. i. 15, because hands and practices were polluted. You that know no worship of God, but in such a solemn duty, your religion is summed up and confined within the limits of temple-worship, family-exercise, and prayer; certainly the rest of your conversation must speak more. God will not

hear but such as worship him and do his will, John iv. 23. Your prayer is a dark parable, if your conversation expone it not. This I speak for this end, to put many of you out of your false ground of confidence. You have nothing but your prayers to trust unto; and for your conversation, you never go about it effectually to reform it, but go on in that which you pray against. We declare unto you the truth, your prayers are abomination, Prov. xxviii. 9. The wicked may have prayers, and therefore think not to please God and flatter him with your mouths, when your conversation is rebellion. Since you hear not him in his commands, God will not hear you in your petitions, Prov. i. 24, 28. You stopped your ear at his reproof, God will stop his ear at your request. If you will go to heaven by your own righteousness, I pray you follow more after it, make the garment more to cover your nakedness: the skirt of a duty is not sufficient.

Secondly, When iniquity is regarded in the heart, and idols set up in God's place, God will not own such a worship, but sendeth a man to the idols he serveth, Psal. lxvi. 18. Ezek. xiv. 3, 4. Do you not often pray to God against a corruption, when your heart cleaveth unto it, and what your mouth saith, your heart contradicteth? Light and conscience often extort a confession of beloved sins, while the temper of the heart hath this language, Lord, grant not my request. And therefore, if there be a prayer for pardon of guilt, yet there is no thorough resolution to quit the sin; and as long as a soul is not resolved to quit the sin, there can be no ingenuous confession of it, and no prayer for removing the guilt can be heard. You cannot employ Christ in his office of mediatorship as a Priest to intercede and offer sacrifice for sin, unless you as sincerely employ him as a Sanctifier and Redeemer; and therefore prayer that separateth Christ's offices, and calleth not on whole Christ calleth not on his name, for his name is Lord Jesus Christ. How can the Lord be inquired of by such a one who cometh to mock him, putteth up an idol in the

heart, and yet prayeth against it, or some other sin, while he is not resolved to quit it? Shall God be resolute to help, when we are not earnest in seeking it? No wonder God answer you acccording to the idol; no wonder you be given up to serve idols, and your sin grow upon you as a plague for your hypocrisy. When you engage your heart too much to any creature, and come to pray and inquire of the Lord in your necessity, shall it not be righteousness with him, to send you to your god? "When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee," Isa. xiii. 57. O man cry unto thy bosom idol, and let it help thee, since thou trustest to it, and spendest thy heart on it! Deut. xxxii. 37, 38, "Where is the god that drunk the wine of your offerings, and eat the fat of your sacrifices?" Where is the creature that you have made your heart an altar to, to send up the flames of your choicest thoughts and affections to it? Let this rise up, and help you now, saith the Lord. Therefore we exhort you, if you would have your prayers a delight, be upright in the thing you seek, and see that you entertain no known sin, give it no heart-allowance.

Thirdly, There are many prayers not heard, not known, because the mouth outcrieth the heart. It is the sacrifice of the contrite heart that God despiseth not. The prayers of this people were such, Isa. xxix. 13, "They drew near with the mouth, but the heart was far away." It is worship in spirit and truth that God loveth, John. iv. 23. Since prayer is a communion of God with the creature, a meeting of one with God, and speaking face to face, God, who is a spirit and immortal, must have a spirit to meet with, a soul to speak to him. Now, do you not find your hearts gadding abroad even in duty? Is it not most about your corns and lands in the time of solemn worship? Therefore God getteth no more but a carcase to keep communion with: he may have as much fellowship with the stones of the wall, and timber of the house, as he can have with your ears and mouths, while you remove your hearts to attend other things. And I would say more,—if your mind be present, yet your heart is gone; sometimes, yea

often, both are gone abroad. Sometimes the mind and thought stayeth, but the affection and heart is not with it, and so the mind's residence is not constant. Your thought may come in as a way-faring man, but tarrieth not all night, dwelleth not. Now speak to it, even Christians, may not your prayers often have a contrary interpretation to what they pretend? You pray so coldrifely and formally, as God will interpret, you have no mind to it: we ask as we seemed indifferent whether our petition be granted or not. Should the Lord be affected with your petitions, when you yourselves are not affected much? Should his bowels of zeal sound within him, when yours are silent? "It is fervent prayer availeth much," James v. 16. A heart sent out with the petition, and gone up to heaven, cannot but bring back an answer. If prayer carry not the seal of the heart and soul in it, God cannot own it, or send it back with the seal of acceptation.

Fourthly, Many prayers are not "calling on God's name;" and no wonder that when people pray, yet the Spirit says, "None calleth on thy name;" for prayer is made, as to an unknown god, and God is not taken up according to his "name," which are his glorious attributes, whereby he manifesteth himself in his word. To "call on God's name," is so to pray to God as to take him up as he hath revealed himself. And what is the Lord's name? Hear himself speak to Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 19, and xxxiv. 6, 7, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands: forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Now, to call on this name, is for the soul, in prayer, to have a suitable stamp on it: every attribute of God taking deep impression in the heart, and so God's name to be written on the very petitions; and shortly, we may say, the Spirit should have the impression of God's greatness and majesty, of his goodness and mercy, of his terribleness and justice. This is the order in which God proclaimeth his name. In the entry, the supplicant should

behold the glorious sovereignty and infinite distance between God and the creature, that he may have the stamp of reverence and abasement upon his spirit, and may speak out of the dust, as it becometh the dust of the balance and footstool to do to him who sitteth on the circle of the heaven as his throne. And this I must say, there is little religion and godliness among us, because every man is ignorant of God. Even God's children do more study themselves, and their condition, than God's greatness and absoluteness. Who searches God's infiniteness in his word and works till he behold a wonder, and be drowned in a mystery? O but the saints of old did take up God at a greater distance from the creatures, they waded far into this boundless ocean of God's Majesty, till they were over head and ears, and were forced to cry out, "Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" All these are but parts of him, his back-parts. There is more real divinity and knowledge of God in one of Job's friend's discourses, one of David's prayers, than now in twenty sermons of gracious men, or many prayers or conferences of saints. But withal you must study his goodness and mercy, and this maketh up the most part of his name. The definition of God hath most of this, so that it may be said truly, that mercy is his delight. Mercy, as it were, swelleth over the rest: God were not accessible, unless mercy did temper it. Behold then greatness to humble, and goodness to make bold, that you may have access. As greatness should leave the stamp of reverence on your petitions, so should mercy and goodness imprint them with faith and confidence; and that the rather, because as Christ is said to be the Father's face, and the image of his person, 2 Cor. iv. 6. and Heb. i. 3, so may he be called the Father's name, and so doth God himself call him, Exod xxiii. 20, 21, "The angel that went before him int he wilderness, whose voice they ought to obey, his name is in him;" and this angel is Christ Jesus, Acts vii. 37, 38. So then Christ Jesus is God's name: God as he revealeth himself in the word, is "God in Christ recon-

ciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. And therefore, Christians, you ought to pray always in Christ's name, and this is to call on his name. Not only encourage yourselves to come to God, because of a mediator, because he is God in Christ, but also offer up all your prayers in the name of Jesus, that his name called on them may sanctify them, otherwise your affectionate prayers cannot be acceptable to God, for he loveth nothing but what cometh through the Son. Prayer must have an evil savour, when it is not put into the golden censer that this angel hath to offer up incense with the prayers of the saints. And likewise you would know God's justice and wrath, that you may serve in fear and trembling: and when trembling is joined with the rejoicing of faith, this is acceptable service. You ought to fear to offend his holiness, while you are before him. Let God's terribleness have a deep impression on your spirits, both to make sin bitter, and to make mercy more sweet. Thus should prayer ascend with the seal of God's attributes, and then it is a calling on his name. Now, is there any calling on his name among us? Who maketh it his study to take up God in his glorious names? Therefore you call not on a known God, and cannot name him. Now, all of you take this rule to judge your prayers by. Think you not that you make many prayers? You both think it and say it, as you use to say, I pray both day and night. Nay, but count after this rule, and there will be found few prayers in Scotland, albeit you reckon up both private and public. Once scrape out of the count the prayers of the profane and scandalous, whose practice defileth their prayers; and again, blot out the prayers of men's tongues and mouths when hearts are absent; and again, set aside the formal, dwyning, coldrife, indifferent supplications of saints, and the prayers that carry no seal of God's name and attributes on them, prayers made to an unknown God, and will you find many behind? No certainly,—any of you may take up the complaint in behalf of the land, "There is none that calleth on thy name," or few to count upon.

You may say so of yourselves if you judge thus,—I have almost never prayed, God hath never heard my voice; and you may say so of the land. This would be a well spent day, if this were but our exercise, to find out the sins of our duties in former humiliation: if the Spirit did so convince you as to blot out of the roll of fasts all the former. If you come this length, as to be convinced solidly that you have never yet prayed and mourned for sin,—I have lived thus long, and been babbling all this while, I have never once spoken to God, but worshipped I know not what, fancied a God like myself, that would be as soon pleased with me, as I was with myself;—if the Lord wrought thus on your hearts, to put you off your own righteousness, you should have more advantage in this, than in all your sabbaths and fasts hitherto.

Secondly, Although the Lord's hand be upon them, and they fade as a leaf, and are driven into another land, yet "none calleth on his name;" this maketh the complaint more lamentable, and no doubt is looked upon as a dreadful sign and token of God's displeasure, and of sorer strokes. Daniel, an eye-witness, confirmeth this foretold truth, chap. ix. 13, "All this is come upon us, yet have we not made our prayers to the Lord our God." Well may the Lord make a supposition and doubt of it, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. After so many plagues are come on, seven added to seven, and again seven times more, and yet they will not be humbled; and when it is even at the door next to utter destruction and consumption, he addeth, "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they take with the punishment of sin," &c. We need ask no reason for this, for "bray a fool in a mortar his folly will not depart from him," Prov. xxvii. 22. Poor foolish man is a foolish man; folly is born with him, folly is his name, and so is he. He hath not so much wisdom as to "hear the voice of the rod, and him that appointeth it." Poor "Ephraim is an undaunted heifer." Nature is a "bullock unaccustomed with the yoke," and so it is chastised more and more, Jer. xxxi. 18. Man is like an un-

tamed beast, as the horse, or as the mule. Threatenings will not do it, "God speaketh once, yea twice, and man perceiveth it not," Job xxxiii. 14. God instructeth by the word, and men receive no instruction: all the warnings to flee from the wrath to come are as so many tales to make children afraid. He saith in his heart, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart." Since, therefore, he will not incline his ear to the word, God sendeth his rod to seal the word, and yet men are so wild that they fight with God's rods, and will not submit to him: "a yoke must be put on Ephraim, a bridle in men's mouth," Psal. xxxii. 9. They will put God to more pains than speaking, and it shall cost them more pain; for he that will not be drawn with the cords of a man, love and intreaties, must be drawn with the cords of a beast, and yoked in a heavy yoke. Yet men are unruly, and the yoke groweth the heavier and sorer, that they strive to shake it off. An uncircumcised heart cannot be humbled,—"How can the leopard change his spots? no more can my people return to me," Jer. xiii. 23. It is strange that a people so afflicted will not take with the punishment of their iniquity, but will say in their heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? But here it is, how can an uncircumcised heart be humbled? "God may beat on men with rods as on a dog, but he will run away from him still the more," Isa. ix. 13. Nay, it may be, there will be more stirring after God, and more awaking by the first stroke of affliction, than when they are continued and multiplied. The uncouthness of rods may affect people something, but when his hand lieth on but a little, custom breedeth hardness, and more and more alienateth spirits from him.

Now we need no more to seal this truth, but our own experience. I think never people might speak more sensibly of it. It hath been the manner of the Lord's dealing with us, to use fair means to gain us, to threaten before he laid on, to give a proclamation before his stroke; and yet it hath been our manner from our youth up to

harden ourselves against him, and go on in our own way. Therefore hath the Lord, after long patience, laid on sad strokes, and smitten us, yet have we not turned to him. It may be, when the chastisement was fresh and green, some "poured out a prayer, and in trouble visited God," Isa. xxvi. 18, but the body of the land hath not known him that smote them, and never ran into their hiding-place, but the temptation of the time, "like a flood, hath carried them away with it." And for the Lord's children, how soon doth the custom of a rod eat out the sense of it, and prayer doth not grow proportionably to the Lord's rods. The Lord hath expected that "some might stand in the gap and intercede, yet few or none called on his name." General corrections of the land hath made general apostacy from God, not a turning in to God; so that we may say, we never entered a furnace, but we have come out with more dross, contracted dross in the fire. Men's zeal and tenderness hath been burnt up, reprobate silver may God call us. We have had so much experience of the unprofitableness of former afflictions, that we know not what the Lord shall do with us. We think it may be the Lord's complaint of Scotland, "Why should you be afflicted any more, you will revolt more and more," Isa. i. 5. What needeth another rod? You are now all secure, it is true, because you are not stricken; nay, but what needeth a rod? For it cannot awake you,—all the fruit of it would be, not to purge away sin, but to increase it. General judgments will prove general temptations, and will alienate you more from me, and make you curse God and the covenant. And indeed, the truth is, we know not what outward dispensation can fall on that can affect this generation; we know not what the Lord can have behind that can work on us. Judgment hath had as much terror, mercies as much sweetness, and as much of God in the one and the other, as readily hath been since the beginning of the world. Only this we know, all things are possible to him which are impossible to us; and if the Spirit work to sanctify the rod, a more gentle

rod shall work more effectually; his word shall do as much as his rod.

The case we are now in is just this—"None calleth on thee." It is a terrible one, whether our condition be good or bad outwardly. Our peace hath put us asleep, and the word cannot put men to prayers. Now, the Lord hath begun to threaten, as you have been still in fear of new troubles, and a revolution of affairs again; yet I challenge your own consciences, and appeal to them, —whom hath the word prevailed with to put to prayer? Whom hath the rumour of approaching trouble put to their prayers? Whose spirit hath been affected with God's frowning on the land? And this yet more aggravateth your laziness; in the time that God doth shew terrible things to his people in Ireland, "giveth them a cup of wormwood, and to drink the wine of astonishment," are not you yet at ease? When your brethren and fellow saints are scattered among you as strangers, yet your hearts bleed not. Well, behold the end of it,—your case is a sad prognostic of the Lord's hiding his face and consuming us; nay, it is a sure token that his face is hid already. When Job's friends would aggravate his misery, they sum it up in this, "thou restrainest prayer from God." It is more wrath to be kept from much praying, than to be scattered from your own houses. Therefore, if you would have the cloud of God's anger, that covereth the land with blackness, go over you, and pour out itself on others; if you would prevent the rod, hearken to the word, and stir up yourselves to much prayer, that you may be called his remembrancers. O how long shall prayer be banished this kingdom? The Lord's controversy must be great with us, for since the days of our first love there has been great decay of the spirit of prayer. The children of God should be so much in it, as they might be one with it. David was so much in prayer, as he in a manner defined himself by it, Psal. cix. 4, "I gave myself unto prayer." In the original, there is no

more but "I prayer." I was all prayer. It was my work, my element, my affection, my action. Nay, to speak the truth, it is the decay of prayer that hath made all this defection in the land. Would you know the original of many a public man's apostacy and backsliding in the cause of God, what maketh them so soon forget their solemn engagements, and grow particular, seeking their own things, untender in seeking the things of God?—would you trace back the desertion up to the fountain-head? Then come and see. Look upon such a man's walking with God in private, such a man's praying, and you shall find matters have been first wrong there. Alienation and estrangement from God himself, in immediate duties and secret approaches, hath made men's affections cool to his interest in public duties. And believe it, the reason why so few great men or none are so cordial, constant, and thorough in God's matters is this,—they pray not in secret; they come to parliament or council where public matters concerning the honour of God are to be debated, as any statesmen of Venice would come to the senate. They have no dependence on God to be guided in these matters; they are much in public duties, but little in secret with God. Believe it, any man's private walking with God shall be read upon his public carriage, whether he be minister or ruler.

There is yet another thing we would have you consider, to endear this duty unto you, and bind upon your consciences an absolute necessity of being much in it, and it is this. Prayer and calling on his name is often put for all immediate worship of God, especially the more substantial and moral part of service. This people was much in ceremonials, and they made these their righteousness; nay, but there was little secret conversing with God, walking humbly with him, loving him, believing in him. Well, then, prayer is, as it were, a compend and sum of all duties; it contains in it, faith, love, repentance, all these should breathe out in prayer. In a word, if we say unto you, be much in prayer, we have said all,

and it is more than all the rest, because it is a more near and immediate approach to God, having more solid religion in it. If you be lively in this, you are thriving Christians; if you wither here, all must decay, for prayer sappeth and watereth all other duties with the influence of heaven.

"That stirreth up himself to take hold on thee." This expresseth more of their condition under the rod, and while God was threatening to depart and leave them. None took so much notice of it, as to awake out of his dream, to take a fast hold of God. It was but like the grip a man taketh in his slumbering, that he soon quitteth in his sleep; none awaketh himself, as a bird stirreth up itself with its wings to flight; none do so spread out their sails to meet the wind. This importeth a great security and negligence, a careless stupidity. To take hold, to grip strongly and violently, importeth both faith acted on God, and communion with God, so that the sense is, nobody careth whither thou go,—there is none that stirreth up himself to take violent hold of thee. Men lying loose in their interest, and indifferent in the one thing necessary, do not strongly grip to it. Nobody keepeth thee by prayer and intercession, so that there is no diligence added to diligence, there is no stirring up of ourselves in security.

First, When the Lord seemeth to withdraw and when he is angry, it is our duty to take hold the more on him; and not only to act faith, and call on him by prayer, but to add to ordinary diligence,—it should be extraordinary. 1st, then, I say, when the Lord is withdrawing and seemeth angry, we ought not to withdraw from him by unbelief, but to draw near, and take hold on him. And the Lord giveth a reason of this himself, Isa. xxvi. 4, 5, "because fury is not in me." It is but a moment's anger, it is not hatred of your persons but sins, it is not fury that hath no discretion in it, to difference between a friend and an enemy; it is but at least a father's anger, that is not for destruction, but correction. The Lord is not implacable. Come to him and win him,—"Let him take hold

of me, and let him make peace with me, if he will make peace." He is a God whose compassions fail not; and so he is never so angry, but there is room left for manifestation of mercy on those that come to him. God's anger is not an humour and passion as ours is, he can take the poor child in his arms, admit it unto his bosom, when outward dispensations frown. Men's anger is like the sons of Belial, briers and thorns, that none may come near to, lest they be hurt; but God angry, is accessible, because his anger is still tempered and mixed with clemency and mercy; and that mixture of mercy is so great, and so predominant in all his dispensations here, that they being rightly understood, might rather invite to come, than scare from it. There is more mercy to welcome, than anger to drive away. 2d. Look upon the very end and purpose of God's hiding himself, and withdrawing,—it is this; "that we may come and seek him early," Hosea v. 15. When God is angry, mercy and compassion principleth it, for anger is sent out to bring in wanderers. His anger is not humour, but resolute and deliberate, walketh upon good grounds, because David in his prosperity missed not God. When all things went according to his mind, then he let God go where he will; therefore, the Lord in mercy must hide his own heart with a frowning countenance, and cover himself with a cloud, that David may be troubled, and so take hold on God, Psalm xxxi. 7, 8. Since, then, this is God's purpose, that you may come nearer to him, and since he goeth away that you may pursue; certainly he will never so run away as you may not find him out, nor will he run farther, than he strengtheneth thee to pursue him; thus, Psalm lxiii. 8, God was flying, and David pursuing; nay, but the flyer giveth legs to the pursuer, he upholdeth him, as it were against himself: so did the angel strengthen Jacob to overcome himself. Now, shall it not be pleasant to God, that you lay hold on him as your own, even when he seemeth to be clothed with vengeance, seeing he changeth his outward countenance for this very end. He

seemeth to go, that you may hold, because when you think he stayeth, you hold not, as the child, while the nurse is near, will look about it, and take hold of anything; but when she withdraweth, the child cleaveth the faster to her.

But, *secondly*, We ought to stir up ourselves more now than any other time: times of God's withdrawing calleth for extraordinary and doubled approaches. So Hos. v. 15, "They will seek me early." And therefore the Lord's children in Scripture have made great advantage of such dispensations. The truth is, as long as we are dealt with, security creepeth on, and religion is but in a decaying condition. Duties are done through our sleep; we are not as men awaking and knowing what we do, and whither we go. But when the Lord beginneth to trouble us, and hides his face, then it is time to awake out of sleep, before all be gone: and there ought to be, 1. More diligence in duties and approaching to God, because your case furnisheth more matter of supplication; and as matter of supplication groweth, prayer should grow. If necessity grow, and the cry be not according to necessity, it is ominous. And therefore David useth to make his cry go up according to his trouble. In a prosperous condition, though every thing might call a tender-hearted loving Christian to some nearness to God; yet ordinarily, if necessity press not, prayer languisheth and groweth formal. Sense of need putteth an edge on supplication, whereas prosperity blunteth it. The heart missing nothing, cannot go above sublunary things; but let it not have its will here, and the need of heaven will be the greater. Now I say, if you fit so many calls, both from a command, and from your own necessities, you do so much the more sin. "Affliction will make even a hypocrite seek him, and pour out a prayer and visit him," Psalm lxxviii. and Isa xxvi. And if you do not take advantage of all these pressures, you must be so much the more guilty; and therefore, God, as it were, wondereth at their obstinacy, "They return not to him that smiteth

them!" All this is come upon us, yet have we not prayed. And, 2. It is sent for that end, that you may be more serious; and therefore you ought so much the more to awake, to lay hold on him. This is the way the Lord useth with his secure and wandering children, Psalm cxix. 67. For the Lord findeth us often gripping too strongly to a present world, and taking it in our arms, as if we were never to part with it. Men's souls cleave to outward accommodations; therefore the Lord useth to part us and our idol, that we may take hold of him the faster. It is union with himself that is our felicity, and it is that which God endeavoureth. When he removeth beloved jewels, it is because they were a stumbling-block, and divorced the soul from God: when he seemeth to withdraw himself his going proclaimeth so much, oh! follow, or perish.

Thirdly, It is a very dangerous thing when he withdraweth and you follow not, when he is angry and you care not, do not fly in to make peace with him. Certainly his anger must wax hotter, and desertion will become a spiritual plague; rods must be tempered with much bitterness. What mixture of mercy can be in such a dispensation, where the fruit of it is to harden? But if the Lord's hardest dealing wrought you to more nearness and communion with himself; then certainly you have a fair advantage against the present trouble, and you have your cup mixed. You shall at length bless God for such dispensations; they may be reckoned for good to you. Next, there ought to be more exercise of faith, and laying hold of the grounds of consolation in God in such a time. 1. For as difficulties grow faith should fortify itself against them so much the more. The greater the storm be, it should fly the more into the chambers. Faith in the time of a calm day getteth no trial; faith bulketh much because it hath not much to do. But except there be some fresh and new supplies it cannot hold out in a temptation. But it is a singular proof of a noble and divine faith,—that can lay hold on him and keep him

when he would go,—that can challenge kindness on a miskenning Jesus,—that can stand on the ground of the promises when there is not a foot-breadth of a dispensation to build on. While all things go with you ye have no difficulty to maintain your faith; nay, but when the Lord seemeth to look angry, then awake and gather strength, and take hold on his strength. Look what is good in your condition or his dispensation, what is good or ominous, then take hold on the other hand on him and look what is in him to answer it, and swallow it up. 2. Ye ought to be well acquainted with the grounds of consolation that are in God, in the worst case, and then ye might lay hold on him though he seemed a consuming fire. It is then a time that calleth most for securing your interest in them, a time when there is no external advantage to beguile you, a time when the only happiness is to be one with God. Therefore the man who, in such calamities and judgments, is not awakened to put his eternal estate out of question, he is in a dangerous case. For, do not most part drive over their days, and have no assurance of salvation, they dare not say either *pro* or *contra*. It may be, and it may not be. And this is the length that the most part come,—a negative peace; no positive confidence; no clear concluding, on sure grounds, an interest. Always [*i.e.* nevertheless] ye are most called to this, when God afflicteth the land or you: if ye do not then make peace it is most dangerous. 3. The Lord loveth faith in a difficulty best,—it is the slingest and the cleanliest, it is that which most honoureth him, and glorifieth his truth and faithfulness, and sufficiency and mercy; for then it is most purely elevated above creatures, and pitcheth most on God; and therefore bringeth men to this, "No help for my soul, but thou art my portion." And this commendeth God most when he is set alone. Prosperity bringeth him down among creatures, and secure faith maketh little distinction; but awakening faith grippeth strongly and singly, putteth God alone.

Secondly, Oftentimes, when God is departing, none

stirreth up himself to lay hold on him. Although there may be praying and doing of many duties, yet there is nothing beyond the ordinary. The varieties and accessions of new grounds of supplication doth never make greater frequency or more fervency. This our experience may clear unto us both in duties and faith. 1. There is very little diligence in seeking of God in the way and means appointed, even when God seemeth to bid farewell to the land, and go away. Nobody cometh in as an intercessor. Men keep on their old way of praying, and never add to it, come what like. Who is it that riseth above his ordinary, as the tide of God's dispensation is? There ought to be such an impression made by the changes of God's countenance as might be read on the duties of his people. There should be such a distance between your ordinary and such times as between a sleeping man and a waking man, that whatever your attainment of access to God be, ye might stir up and go beyond it according as matters call. Will God count your public fasts a performance of this duty? Alas, we fast sleeping and none stirreth up himself to these things. Is there any difference betwixt your solemn humiliation and another Sabbath? And is there any difference between a Sabbath and a week-day, save the external duty? Is not this palpably our case? Is there any wakening among us? No, security is both the universal disease and complaint; and it is become an incurable disease since it became a complaint. Doth any of you pray more in private than he used? Or what edge is on your prayers? Alas, the Lord will get good leave to go from us; it feareth me that we would give Christ a testimonial to go over seas. Hold him, hold him! Nay, the multitude would be gladly quit of him,—they cannot abide his yoke, his work is a burden, his word is a torment, his discipline is bands and cords; and what heart can ye then have to keep Christ? What violence can ye offer to him to hold him still? All your intreaties may be fair compliments, but they would never rent his garment. 2. There is no up-stirring to

faith among us, and laying hold on Jesus Christ, albeit all his dispensations warn us that it is now high time. There are not many who are about this point, effectually to stir up their faith or secure their interest. Think ye that conjectures will carry you through difficulties? The multitude think they believe much, but any temptation proveth their mistake. The most part of Scotland would deny God and his Son Jesus Christ if they were put to it. Always [*i. e.* nevertheless] it is a time ye would not lie out from your stronghold,—faith only uniteth you to Christ, and if ye would be kept in any trial, stir up faith.

Thirdly, Prayer and faith, diligence and laying hold on God, must go together and help one another. Not calling on his name, and not laying hold on him go together, and have influence one upon another. 1. Faith hath influence on prayer. Laying hold on God in Christ will make right calling on his name, it learneth men how to call God, to call him Abba, Father. Faith useth to vent itself in prayer. I say, much consideration of God, and claiming into him, and to the grounds of confidence in him, must both make prayer acceptable, and carry the stamp and impression of God's name, or Christ's name, on it, and also make much prayer: for when a soul hath pitched on God as its only felicity, and thus made choice of him, it findeth in him all sufficiency, all things for all things. There is no necessity, but it findeth a supply in his fulness for it; and therefore it applieth a man to the fountain, "to draw out of the wells of salvation." There is nothing can be so sweet and refreshing as for such a soul to pour out itself every day in him, to talk with him face to face. Faith engageth the heart to come to God with all things; whereas many difficulties would have been, and the secure or unsettled heart would have gone as many different ways to help them. Faith layeth hold on God, knoweth but one, and bringeth all here; and therefore access to God is a fruit of it, "Access unto the grace wherein we stand by faith." And again, how can prayer be acceptable as long as faith doth not principle

it?—it is but like a beast groaning under a burden. Laying hold on God himself makes a man's duties acceptable, because he speaks and asks; believing that he shall receive, he trusteth God and doth not tempt him. Where lively faith is not entertained there cannot be much affection, which is the oil of the wheels. There may be in some bitterness of spirit much vehemency; but that is not a pure flame of divine love that burneth upward to him, and it is soon extinguished, and lasteth no longer than present sense, and then the soul groweth harder, as iron that had been in the fire. 2. When there is not much prayer and calling, faith cannot be strong and violent: for prayer is even the exercise of faith; if you wear out of that, faith rusteth. There may be much quietness with little prayer, but there cannot be much, and strong, and lively faith; for where it getteth not continual employment it fags. And indeed prayer is a special point of holding God fast, and keeping him; therefore join these, if ye would thrive in any one of them. Your unbelieving complaints are not prayers and calling on his name, because they are not mixed with faith. As the apostle said of the word, so may it be said of prayer,—your prayers are not profitable, are not heard, because not mixed with faith. Ye use to doubt, that ye may be fervent, to question your interest, that ye may stir up your spirits to prayer; but alas! what a simple gross mistake is that! Poor soul, though thou get more liberty, shall it be counted access to God? Though you have more grief, and your bitterness doth indite more eloquence, shall God be moved with it? Know ye not that you should ask without wavering, and lift up pure hands without wrath and doubting? And yet both are there.

Fourthly, The duty we are called to in such a time when God is angry, is to lay hold on him. We would speak a word more of it: and, 1. We ought to hold a departing Lord, by wrestling with him in supplication, "not to let him depart till he bless," Hos. xii. 3, 4. The

application of Jacob's victory over the angel is thus, "Turn ye to the Lord, and wait on him," &c. How had Jacob power over the angel? By supplication and weeping; so that prayer is a victory over God, even the Lord God of Hosts. We ought, as it were, to strive against outward dispensation; when it saith, He is gone; when our condition saith, He is gone, or going, we ought to wrestle with it. No submission to such a departing, I mean, no submission that sitteth down with it, and is not careful how it be. Now this time calleth you to such an exercise. The Lord seemeth to be angry with us. There is a strong cloud over the land, and like to pour down upon us,—the Lord is drawing a sword again, and beginning now to lay on. Many threatenings would not put us to supplication. Now, what will the laying on of the rod do? If the former days be returning wherein ye saw much sorrow, is it not then high time for the Lord's remembrancers, and for the Lord's children, to wrestle with God? As Esau was coming on Jacob, so hath God armed men, and such desperate men, as he hath made a rod to us before. If we be twice beaten with it, it is very just, for before we did not seek to him who smote us. You would know this, that the Lord is but seeking employment, and if ye would deal with him, ye may make advantage of the present and future calamities. And look to this laying hold on him; this is the chief thing ye should now heed. It is God himself that should be your principal object. Praying should be a laying hold on God, it should meet with himself. For the most part in the time of prosperity, we cannot meet with God singly, we have so much to do with creatures; we keep trysts so punctually with them, so that we cannot keep with God. We have so many things in our affections and thoughts, that God cannot get place, he cannot get us at leisure for the throng of our business; we lose God by catching at shadows. Well then, we are called in such a time of difficulty to come in to God himself, to draw by the vail of ordinances, that we may have communion

with God himself. And this is right praying, when the soul getteth such immediate access to God, as it were, to handle him, and see him, and taste him, to exercise its senses on him. Ordinances have been of a long time a covering of his face, and he useth not now to unvail himself in the sanctuary, and let us see his glory. God is departed from preaching and praying, and the solemn meeting; so that we meet not with God,—we lay hold on a shadow of an outward ordinance, but not on God himself. Therefore, Christians, make advantage of this time. You may be brought to want ordinances, then lay hold on himself, who is the substance and marrow of them. You may be denuded of outward comforts and accommodation here, then lay hold on himself in much prayer. If affliction would blow away the cloud on his face, or would scatter our idols from us, and make us single alone with God, as Jacob was, it were well sent.

2. Your exercise should be to take hold on God by faith. And, (1.) ye would make peace with God, be much in direct acts of apprehending God himself in Jesus Christ. And this is acording as ye take up yourselves in your own misery and necessity. Do but travel continually between your own misery and something answerable in God.

The first thing we would have you do now when God frowns upon us, is to find out your own lost condition, and how great strangers you have been to him, even when ye have approached in many ordinances; and find a necessity of making peace with God and atonement. Now from this lay hold on Christ, as "the hope set before you." Look upon that in him which will answer all your necessities, and be suitable to them. It is not matters of outward lot that should go nearest your heart. Let the world go where it will, that which concerneth you most in such a time, is the securing of your soul: for if you lose it, what gain you? what keep you? Your houses, and lands, and lives may be in hazard;

nay, but one thing is more worth than all these, and in more hazard. Begin at spiritual things, and ask how matters stand between God and thee.

(2.) Not only would ye be much in immediate application unto Jesus Christ, but ye would so take hold of him, as ye may be sure ye have him. Make peace, and know that ye have made it, and then shall ye be kept in perfect peace. You would never rest until you can on solid grounds answer the question. And this duty is called for from you at such a time, for "the just shall live by faith," in a troublesome time, Hab. ii. 4. And as ye ought to keep and hold fast confidence, and not cast it away in such a time, so should ye all seek after it. Do not only rest in this,—I know not but I may belong to Christ, I dare not say against it. O no, Christians, you should have positive clear grounds of assurance! "I am his, and he is mine." "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "God is my portion." And if ye conclude this solidly, I defy all the world to shake and trouble your peace: this is perfect peace, "peace, peace," double peace. How can ye choose but be shaken at every blast of temptation, when you are not thus solidly grounded, when you hold not at your anchor?

And, (3.) Having thus laid hold on Christ, as your own, lay hold on all in him as yours, and for your use. Whatever difficulty the present time, or your own condition afford, search but as much in God as may counterbalance it. Answer all objections, from his mercy, goodness, power, wisdom, unchangeableness, and this shall be more than the trouble. God himself laid hold upon, and made ours, is more than removing a temporal calamity. It is an eternal weight, to weigh down all crosses and disappointments. For what can present things be? Is there not in the favour of his countenance that which may drown them in oblivion? Are ye like to sink here? Is not God a sure anchor to hold by? And if ye do not this, your trouble is nothing in respect of the danger of your soul. Secure and loose lying out

of God, not putting this matter to a full point, is worse than all your outward fading. Therefore, we exhort you in the Lord's name, to fly into this name of the Lord, as a strong tower to run to and be safe. When the Lord seemeth now to be angry with us, run not away from him, though he should yet clothe himself with vengeance as a garment.

But, *first,* O ye poor people, who have never asked this question, whether have I any interest in Jesus? ask it now, and resolve it in time. If trouble come on, if scattering and desolation come on, and our land fade as a leaf, certainly the Lord's anger will drive you away. What will ye do in the time of his indignation? All of you, put this to the trial,—how matters stand between God and you.

And, *secondly,* If ye find all wrong, do not sink in discouragement; all may be amended, while it is seen wrong in time. Nay, God taketh away outward accommodation, to make you more serious in this. And it is the very voice of rods, every one fly into your hold, every one make peace with me. You may take hold, and do it feckfully, [*i. e.* vigorously.]

Thirdly, You who have fled to Jesus, take more hold of him; you are called also to renew your faith, and begin again. Make peace with God, let your confidence be kept fast, and thus shall ye be immovable, because he changeth not. God will not go from you if ye believe,—hold him by faith. Christ could not do great things in "Galilee, because of their unbelief, and so he departed from them." As unbelief maketh an evil heart to depart from the God of all life and consolation, so doth it make God depart from us. But faith casteth a knot upon him, (to speak with reverence,) it fasteneth him by his own word and promise, and he cannot go by it. It is a violent hand laid on God. "I will not let thee go till thou bless me."

Fourthly, Faith and prayer, or holding of God, by believing in him, and much employing him, needeth much

stirring up unto, and awaking. "That stirreth up himself to take hold on thee." Security is the moth of both these, and eateth out the life of faith and supplication: it maketh prayer so coldrife, that it cannot prevail, and faith so weak, that it cannot use violence. 1. Security apprehendeth no evil, no need. A secure condition is a dream that one is eating, and yet his soul is empty. Look how the people of Laish were quiet and secure, apprehending no evil; destruction cometh then on as an armed man. Always [*i. e.* notwithstanding] it is much necessity that administers fuel to a man's faith and supplication. David, Psal. xxx. 7, "I said in my prosperity, I shall not be moved." Nay, but many say in adversity, and cry peace, peace, where no peace is. Security pleadeth innocency, and then believeth immunity. "I am innocent, therefore shall his anger turn away," Jer. ii. 35. Security applieth not sin, and so refuseth the curse of sin and wages of it. And thus is a man in his own eyes, "a lord, and then he will come no more to God," Jer. ii. 31. It is almost impossible to awake men by general judgments, to apprehend personal danger, and men never stir out of their nest, till it be on fire. We can behold, or hear of our neighbours' spoiling, and violence done to them; but till the voice of a cry be heard in our own streets and fields nobody will take the judgment to themselves. It is well said, that which is spoken to all, is spoken to none; so what is done to all in general, is done to none. The voice of a general rod speaketh not particularly, and maketh not men apprehensive of sad things; and thus men are not pressed unto prayer—are not put out of themselves; it is only necessity that saps the roots of it, and makes it green. 2. Security is lazy and not active, putteth not forth its hand to work, and so dieth a beggar, for "only the hand of the diligent maketh rich." Laying hold on God is a duty that requireth much spirit in it: men do not grip things well in their slumbering. There is no duty that needeth so spiritual and lively principles. If a man do not put on such a

piece of resolution and edge upon him, he cannot come to the wrestling of prayer and violence of faith. Although the exercise and acting of grace dependeth more upon the Spirit of God's present influence, than upon the soul of man; yet this is the way the Lord communicateth his influence, by stirring up and exciting the creature to its duty, as if it could do it alone. Grace is one thing, and the stirring up of it is another thing. For when we lie by and sleep over our time, and go not about the matter so seriously, as it were life and death, it is but a weak hold we can take of God. According to the measure of a man's apprehending necessity, and according to the measure of his seriousness in these things, so will the hand of faith grip, and lay hold with more or less violence. As a man drowning will be put from sleeping, and when one is in extreme hazard all his strength will unite together in one to do that which at any ordinary time it could not do, so ought it to be here. A Christian assaulted with many temptations, should unite his strength, and try the yondmost [*i. e.* uttermost]. O but your whole spirits would run together, to the saving of yourselves, if ye were very apprehensive of necessity! The exercise of faith is a dead grip, that cannot part with what it grippeth. Therefore, (1.) we must say to you, it is not so easy a thing as you believe, to lay hold on God,—there must be stirring up to it. And when the Lord speaketh of our stirring ourselves, certainly he meaneth this likewise, that he must stir us, ere we stir ourselves. (2.) Above all, be afraid of a secure condition: it is the enemy of communion with God and spiritual life. Therefore, look about you, and apprehend more your necessity, and then give no rest and quietness to yourself, till you have employed and engaged him; be as men flying to lay hold on the refuge set before you. (3.) It must be a time of little access to God, and little faith, when we are all secure, and nobody goeth about religion as their work and business. We allow ourselves in it; therefore, we do exhort you, *first*, to purpose this as your end to

aim at, and purpose by God's grace to take more hold of God. There is little minding of duty, and that maketh little doing of it. Once engage your hearts to a love and desire of more of this, come to a point of resolution; I must know him more, and trust more in him, be more acquaint with him And, *secondly*, Put yourselves in the way of duty. It is God that only can stir you up, or apply your hearts to the using of violence to God: but ye would be found in the outward means much, and in these ways God will meet with you, if you wait on him in them.

"For thou hast hid thy face from us." Here is the greatest plague, a spiritual plague. The last verse was but the beginning of sorrows, "We all do fade," &c. But lo, here the accomplishment of misery, "God hiding his face," and consuming them in the hand of their sins.

First, The Lord's hiding of his face, and giving up a people to melt away in their sins; punishing with judicial blindness and security, is the worst judgment, it filleth the cup full. This complaint goeth on still worse; and certainly it is worse than their fading as a leaf and exile out of their land. It is not without reason, that great troubles and afflictions are so expressed, "thou didst hide thy face." As David said, "thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled;" importing as much, as it is not trouble that doth trouble, but God's hiding of his face that maketh trouble trouble. It is in so far trouble, as it is a sign of his displeasure, and as the frowns of his countenance are upon it; therefore, the saints aggravating their affliction, say, "Thou hidest thy face." You know the face is the place wherein either kindness or unkindness appeareth. The Lord's countenance, or face, is a refreshful sweet manifestation of himself to a soul; it is the Lord using familiarity with a spirit, and this made David more glad than corn and wine. Now, the hiding of the face, the withdrawing of his countenance, is, when the Lord in his dispensation and dealing doth withhold the manifestation of himself, either in life or consolation: when he

covereth himself with clouds round about, that neither can a soul see into the backside of it—into his own warm heart, nor can the sun-beams shine through to quicken and refresh the soul. The Lord draweth over his face a vail of a crossing dispensation, or such like.

There is a desertion of the soul in the point of life and spiritual action, and there is a desertion in regard of consolation. The varieties of the Lord's desertions run upon these two. As a Christian's life is action or consolation, and the Lord's influence is either quickening or comforting, so his withdrawing is either a prejudice to the one or the other. Sometimes "he goeth mourning all the day," nay, but "he is sick of love;" sometimes he is a bottle dried in the smoke, and his moisture dried up. The Christian's consolation may be subtracted, and his life abide, but he cannot have spiritual consolation, if he be not lively. This life is more substantial,—comfort is more refreshful,—life is more solid,—comfort sweet; that is true growing solid meat, this but sauce to eat it with.

The hiding here meant is certainly a spiritual punishment. The Lord denying unto this people grace to understand the voice of the rod,—he appearing as a party against them,—leaving them to their own carnal and lazy temper, and thus they lay still under God's displeasure. Now, there is nothing like this, 1st, because it is a spiritual punishment, and estates are not to be valued and laid in the balance with the soul. Albeit men are become so brutish as to abase their souls, and prostitute them to any thing, yet all a man hath, is not considerable to it. 2dly, It is a more excellent thing that is removed by it,—"In his favour is life,"—all felicity and happiness is in God's countenance. If a man have not this, what hath he else? Losses are according as the thing is. Nay, but here is more,—"My Lord is taken from me, my God hath forgotten me." And indeed, if man's true happiness be in communion with God, certainly, any interruption coming in must be sad, and make a man more miserable than the world knoweth. There is a greater emphasis in that word,

"Thou hast hid thy face," than if he had said, all the world hideth their face and maketh a scorn of us.

Therefore, 1. Know what is the worst thing of the times. Many of you think sword and pestilence, and the burdens of the time, the worst things; and if you were now to complain, the saddest complaint would be,—affliction is laid on our loins. But know this, if your cities were desolate; if your land were made a wilderness, and we captives in another land, there is yet a worse thing than all these; and think you not this strange? Nay, I say, there is something worse already in us, that we know not of, and it is this,—"Make the hearts of this people hard." A spirit of slumber and deadness from the Lord upon the land: there are multitudes he will never shew his face unto; it is still vailed from them, and they know him not. Ye that think all were well, if ye had peace and prosperity, and know no hiding of God's countenance, —no anger but when he striketh, certainly you know not what his countenance is; by all "these things men neither know love nor hatred." 2. Whatever calamity come upon you outwardly, deprecate most spiritual plagues and God's deserting. If you have God's countenance, it may make you glad in much sadness. You would be most careful lest any partition-wall come in; lest his countenance change on you, if you grieve his Spirit and break his heart. Seek to have his face to shine, and this shall be a Sun "with healing under his wings." O but Christ's countenance is comely, when it is seen without clouds! but often it is overclouded with much provocation.

Secondly, The Lord's hiding of his face hath influence on the temper of spirits and disposition in duties. The truth is in general, "In him we live and move and have our being!;" and, more especially, in many things that are spiritual, we are of ourselves able to do nothing. The creature's holiness, and especially our life, is but as the rays that the Sun of righteousness sendeth forth round about him, and if any thing come between it evanisheth.

As the marygold that openeth its leaves when the sun riseth, and closeth when it goeth down again, so exactly doth our spiritual constitution follow the motions of his countenance, and depend wholly on them,—"Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled," Psalm civ. 9. The Lord needeth no more but discountenance us, and we are gone.

Always, [*i. e.* nevertheless] *first*, Be more dependent creatures. We use to act as from habits within, without any subordination to the Lord's grace without us; but we find that our sufficiency is not of ourself. How often doth your spiritual condition change on you in an hour? You cannot command one thought of God, or act from any habit of grace, even then when you can bring forth other gifts in exercise. Ye find that grace findeth more difficulties—more interruptions, therefore learn to attend the changes and motions of his countenance.

Secondly, When you find your heart dead, and you concluded under an impossibility of taking hold on God in a lively manner, then, I pray you, look unto the Lord's suspending of his influence, and let your whole endeavours be at the throne of grace to help it. It will not be your own provoking of yourself to your duty, but you must put yourself upon God, that he may cause his face to shine.

Thirdly, Though the Lord's hiding his face be often a cause of our deadness, and his desertion maketh all to wither, yet we have often a culpable hand in it; and he hides his face being provoked so to do. One thing we may mention, grieving of the Holy Ghost whereby we are sealed, quenching the motions of the Spirit, maketh the Spirit cover his face with a vail and hide it. There is here ordinarily a reciprocal or mutual influence. Our grieving him, makes him withdraw his countenance; and his withdrawing his countenance, maketh us to wither and grow barren.

Fourthly, The most sure and infallible token of the Lord's hiding his face, is security, and a spirit of deadness and laziness; when folk go about duties dreaming, and

do all, as it were, through their sleep. Therefore we may conclude sad things on this land, that the Lord hideth his face from us. And therefore arise, and do not settle and quiet yourselves in such a condition. The Lord is angry; needeth any more be said? No more needeth to kind children; but the rod must follow this to make anger sensible.

SEVERAL SERMONS

UPON

THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS

OF

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

First Published in 1760.

From the preface appended to the original edition of the following Sermons it appears that they were transcribed by the editor, who only mentions his place of residence, Brousterland in Lanarkshire, from a much larger collection of manuscript discourses in his possession. He states that they were found "in a folio and quarto volume, bound up with the greatest part of his (Binning's) printed works," that they appeared "not to be any way inferior to the discourses which the world have been favoured with," that "a good number of them are copied from his own papers by Mr. Robert M'Ward, his friend, with marginal notes, as an index or contents of the heads of his discourses," and that "the sermons written in another hand are corrected by him with the same useful marginal indexes." He mentions the texts and titles of a considerable number of other discourses and expositions which he had carefully transcribed; and adds, that these "volumes were many years concealed in the library of John Graham, a pious and learned man, much abstracted from the world, who was a near relation of Mr. M'Ward's. In a Life of Mr. Binning, written by the late Rev. John Brown of Whitburn, and published first in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor of July 1823, and afterwards, in 1828, as a preface to a small volume of selections from his writings, the possessor of the above manuscripts was invited to declare himself, in order that steps might be taken for securing their publication. It does not appear, however, that they were in consequence brought to light.

SERMONS.

I.

1 John iii. 23.—And this is his commandment, that ye believe in the name of Christ, and love one another.

It is a common doctrine often declared unto you, that the most part of those who hear the gospel, do run in their pretended course to heaven, either upon a rock of dashing discouragement, or the sands of sinking presumption. These are in all men's mouths, and no question they are very dangerous,—so hazardous, that many fools make shipwreck either of the faith, or a good conscience; of the faith, by running upon, and dashing upon the rock—of a good conscience by sitting down upon the quicksand. But I fear that which is commonly confessed by all is cordially believed by few, and so little regarded in our course and conversation. All Christians pretend to be making a voyage heaven-ward, and that is only homeward. Now the gospel is given us to direct our course, and teach us how to steer between these two hazards, both safely and surely. This is the shore that shall guide us, and conduct to our intended haven, that is heaven, if we set our compass by it, and steer our course accordingly. Yet strange it is to behold the infinite wanderings and errors of men on the one hand or the other, some presuming upon the news of mercy, and the sound of God's

grace, to walk after the imagination of their own hearts, and to live and continue in sin for which Christ died, that he might redeem us from it, fancying a possibility of living in sin and escaping wrath, and so abusing the tender of grace to promote licentiousness. Others again apprehending the wrath of God, and their just deservings; abusing the notion of God's justice, and the perfection of his holiness, to the prejudice of the glory of his grace and mercy, and their own salvation. This is certainly the cunning sleight of Satan, with the deceitfulness and ignorance of our own hearts, that leads men, and sometimes one and the same man at divers times, to contrary misapprehensions of divine truths. The wind of temptation gets fires to one corner of the house and then to another, and sometimes overpersuades the notion of mercy, and another time overstretches the apprehension of his justice, and yet in effect there is no true persuasion of any of them, but a cloud or shadow is apprehended instead of them.

Now, I say, there is one cure for both these—the right apprehension of the gospel in its entire and whole sum—the right uptaking of the light which shines in a dark place, and is given to lead us to our place of rest; to have a complete model and a short summary of the gospel always in our heart and eye: for truly it is the apprehending of parcels of divine truth, which leads men into such opposite mistakes and courses. To remedy this, we have some brief comprehensive models of the gospel, set down by the Holy Ghost, and none in better terms than this here,—"This is his commandment that ye believe in the name of Christ, and love one another." You have it in two words, faith and love. This is the form of sound words which we should hold fast, 2 Tim. i. 13. This is the mould of doctrine delivered by Christ and his apostles. It is the separation of these two in some men's fancy, that leads too many in such paths of destruction. Truly, they can as little be divided as the sun's light and heat; but the motions and shadows of them may, and it is the following the shadows of some of them which ship-

wrecks souls. Now not only the common multitude of the hearers of the gospel are in hazard of this, but even God's own children who have believed in him.

The taking up of these things apart, creates the heart much trouble, and perplexity, and occasioneth much sin and stumbling. I do think it is the ignorance and inadvertency of this conjunction, that makes our case both more sad, and sinful, than otherwise it would be. And these two indeed have a mutual influence upon one another, loosing reins to sin more freely, for it unquestionably disturbs the soul's peace, and procures it much bitterness. And again, the quitting hold of the promise of grace in Christ Jesus, and the indulging our own sad and sullen apprehensions, cannot but in the issue disable the soul from the duties of love, and expose it unto the violence of every temptation. As these two do mutually strengthen one another; the faith of Jesus Christ, and the lively apprehension of his grace and goodness, so they are the most noble and effectual persuasives to live unto him, and to walk in love. Besides, faith is the mean and way which God hath appointed to convey his influence unto the soul; and then again love carrying itself actively in duties to God and men, bestirring itself for God, and those who are beloved of God, it brings in a supply to faith, and returns by a straight compass to the spring from whence it first issued, and increases it still more. Believing on the name of the Son sends forth the stream of holy affection to him, and all begotten of the Father, and this returns again by the circuit of obedience to his commands, and submission to his easy yoke, to unbosom itself in the fountain from whence it first issued; and whereas faith was at first one simple soul-adherence to a Saviour, and a hearty embracing of him, this accession of the fruits of it exalts it unto that height of assurance, and gives it that evidence which it wanted; and faith being thus strengthened, and rooted, and built up to the top of assurance of God's grace, love, and salvation, it becomes more able to bear the yoke of his commands, which are not grievous.

The spring of believing thus swelled by the concurrence of so many streams, it breaks forth the more, and sends out more love and delight in God, and more charity, compassion, and meekness towards men. And this is the circle and round Christianity runs, until that day come that the head-spring of faith shall be obscured and shrivelled up in the great sea of the love of God, which shall overflow all the saints' graces in due time, when we shall see God face to face.

This is a true Christian, which this apostle so beloved of God describes. He is one under a commandment, and not above it, as some fondly conceive: He is a keeper of his commands, and a doer of those things which are pleasant in God's sight. This is no legal notion, if it be right taken.

It is not the bondage of the creature, to be under the command of God; truly it is the beauty and liberty of a reasonable soul. Some speak of all subjection unto a law as slavery; but is it not an infinitely greater slavery to be at liberty to sin, and serve our own lusts? O wretched and base liberty! The Son indeed makes us truly free, and that from sin; and he is truly a Redeemer who redeems us from all iniquity, John viii. 32. Psal. cxxx. ult. Tit. ii. 14.

But this commandment here spoken of, would not indeed be gospel, unless there was a prior command, a brighter precept given by the Father to the Son. I find two commands given by the Father, and received by the Son, which two you may conjoin and make one of, as here faith and love are one commandment. The first is, John x. 18. "I lay down my life of myself; no man taketh it from me. This commandment have I received from my Father," and no other. John xii. 49, 50, "The Father gave me a commandment, what I should say, and speak, and I know that his commandment is life everlasting." This is more expressly and clearly set down, John vi. 39, 40, "This is the Father's will that sent me, that of all that he gave me I should lose none, but raise them up at the

last day. This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life." Here then, beloved in the Lord, is the foundation of our hope, and that which makes all commandments given by God to us, to come under a gospel-notion, that which makes Christ's yoke easy, and his burden light, and his commands not grievous. The great commandment was imposed upon our Saviour; the great weight of that wrath due to our sins, was put upon his shoulders. This was the Father's will that he should lay down his life for his sheep; this command he received willingly, and obeyed faithfully and fully. And by his obedience to this, that great obligation to satisfy God's justice and pay a ransom for our souls is taken off us; in as much as he died, justice cannot come and demand it at our hand. Now, therefore, there is another commandment given to Christ, which directly concerns us; and it is this in substance, "I will and command that thou who hast come in the place of sinners, and resolvest to die for them, that thou give eternal life to whom thou wilt, even to as many as believe in thy name. I give to thee the absolute disposal of life and death; I command thee to preach life everlasting to all pious souls, that shall flee unto thee upon the apprehension of the danger of death, and that thou bestow that life upon them, and raise them up at the last day to be partakers of it." This is the commission the Father gave to the Son; a sweet commission for poor sinners, and the charter of our salvation. And for this errand he was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and sent into the world; nay, the commission extends further than grace, even to eternal glory also. Christ has received commandment of the Father, to give repentance and remission of sin, both to give faith, and love, and all other graces, else it were defective. Thus Christ comes instructed to the world, he lays open his commission in preaching the gospel, he obeys the first commandment in his own person, by offering up himself upon the cross a sacrifice for sins, and he is about the fulfilling the next command-

ment, that is, the giving life to them that believe: and that he may accomplish it, having ascended himself unto heaven to intercede for us, he also sent his ambassadors into the world, to whom he hath committed the word of reconciliation, and he gives them commission to publish and proclaim this commandment in his own name; this is his command, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. And this we do proclaim in his name, since he has gotten a commandment to give life everlasting to believers. Then this is his charge to you, to come and receive it from him; come and embrace him, and ye shall have life and all in him; this is the hardest and heaviest burden he imposes upon you, the weight of your life and salvation he hath taken upon himself. But oh now come and lay hold on him, who is thus offered unto you. Know that you are lost and undone in yourselves; consider the impossibilities you lie under to escape his wrath. Behold the anger of God hanging over your head, ready to be revealed in flaming fire and a tempestuous cloud of eternal misery. Will ye consider that ye are born heirs of wrath, your natural inheritance is in the lake of fire; and whatsoever your endowments by nature, or your privileges by birth be, nothing shall exeem thee from this. Shall not then this Saviour be welcome to thee? For truly faith is but a cordial salutation and embracement of our blessed Redeemer; the soul brings him into the house, and makes him welcome, and he is standing ready to come in to your heart, and to bring in salvation with him.

Now whatever soul hath obeyed this commandment by belief of the truth, and receiving of Christ into the heart, there is but one commandment behind, and it is not grievous, viz. Love me, and love one another; love me and live unto me. This is an easy yoke, and there is good reason for it, though it had never been required to love him, and live to him, who loved not his life unto the death for us. There is mention made only of brotherly love here, but certainly the other love to God, flowing from the sense of his love, is the right wing of the soul, and brotherly-love

the left; and by these the pious soul mounts up to heaven with the wings of an eagle. The love of our brother is but the fruit and consequent of this love, but it is set down, as a probation and clear evidence of the love of God in our souls.

Love is commanded as the very sum and substance of the whole law, as the fountain of all other duties; things are compacted in their causes, and lie hid within the virtue of them. Truly this is the way to persuade and constrain you to all the duties of godliness and righteousness, of piety towards God, and charity towards men, if once we could fasten this chain of affection upon your hearts, and engage your souls by love to God and man. We cannot but beat the air, while we seek to persuade you to the serious practice of religious duties, of prayer in secret, and in your families, of reading and meditation upon the word, of sanctifying the sabbath, of dealing justly and moderately with all men, of sobriety and temperance in your conversation; of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, of walking humbly with God, and towards men, of restraining and subduing your inordinate lusts and passions; I say, it is almost in vain to press these things upon you, or expect them from you, till once the Spirit of power and love enter into your hearts. And indeed the Spirit of love is a powerful Spirit; the love of God, possessing the heart within, cannot but conform all within and without to his love and good pleasure. Love only can do those things which are pleasant in his sight, for it doth them pleasantly, heartily, and cheerfully, and God loves a cheerful giver, and a cheerful worshipper. Brotherly love is rather expressed, because little or not at all studied by the most part; other duties to God, if men come not up in practice to them, yet they approve them in their soul and mind. But there is scarce a notion of the obligation of charity and love towards our brethren, yea not so much as in the minds of Christians, let be in their practice. It is the special command which Christ left to his disciples when he was going away, John

xiii. 35. but alas we have forgotten it, it is so long since.

II.

1 John iii. 23.—This is his commandment, that ye believe in the name of his Son, &c.

We commonly make many rules in religion, and turn it into a laborious art, full of intricate questions, precepts, and contentions. As there hath been a great deal of vanity in the conception of speculative divinity, by a multitude of vain and unedifying questions which have no profit in them, or are beneficial to them that are occupied therein, but have only stirred up strife and envy, and boiled the flame of contention in the Christian world; so I fear that practical divinity is no less vitiated and spoiled in this age amongst true Christians (by many perplexed cases relating to every condition) than the other among the school-men. Hereby it seems to me, that Christ and his apostles did not suppose it to be so perplexed a business as we now do make it; neither did the hearers weary themselves or others with so many various objections against the practice of the fundamental commandment of the gospel, believing in Jesus Christ. The plain nature of the gospel being holden forth and received, I am persuaded was and is able (like the sun arising in brightness) to dispel and scatter all these mists and clouds which do arise both in the one and the other, from ignorance at first, and are elevated to a greater height, by the custom of the times. The matter, my brethren, is not so dark as you make it; here it is plainly and simply expressed: "This is his commandment that ye believe in the name of his Son, and then love one another." Ye all know that we had commandments given us by God, which were by nature impressed on the heart of man; but by his fall into sin, the tables of the law (which I may say were in Adam's mind and heart, understanding and affec-

tion) those two tables were broken in the fall, and since there could be no obedience, because of ignorance and perversion, the tables breaking in pieces, their ruptures have produced these two opposite principles. The fall of man hath broken his mind, and so darkened his understanding, and broken his will, and put it in a wrong set. This appointed it, set it in a posture of enmity against God. However, we are by this fall utterly disabled to stand up before God, in acceptable obedience; there is no man breathing, how blameless soever he be before the world, but he must fall down as guilty before God, in many things, yea in all things. But the law being thus obliterated out of men's consciences, as he lost ability to obey, so he lost almost all conscience of sin and disobedience; he not knowing his charge and obligation, could not accuse himself for falling in rebellion; therefore it pleased the Lord to cause the law to be written in tables of stone in mount Sinai; he transcribes the commandments over again that all the world may see their obligation, and how infinitely short they have come in their subjection, and how just their condemnation may be. For this purpose the Lord causes proclaim the old bond in the ears of men with great majesty and authority as it became the lawgiver, that all may become guilty and stop their mouth before God, Rom. iii. 19. He would once have all men, knowing that they are under infinite breaches of his commandments, that they may see themselves also subject to his judgment. Now what do you think of a soul that stands at the foot of this mountain, and hears a dreadful accusation read against it, all which the conscience within must subscribe unto, and both together pronounce the person guilty and liable to eternal punishment? I say, what can such a soul do, which has with trembling heard his voice? Satisfaction there cannot be given for an infinite offence against an infinite nature; the curse and sentence which was the sanction and confirmation of this commandment, that is just; and there appears no way how, without violation of God's justice, it can be repealed.

Obedience to these commandments is now both impossible and unprofitable; impossible I say, because of the weakness and wickedness of the flesh, that has no ability nor willingness but to offend and disobey; and unprofitable, because it cannot at all relax the former sentence of condemnation. Now, obedience being a present duty, cannot pay old debts, or satisfy for our former rebellions, and so it must leave a man to seen condemnation. I fear this is a puzzle that all consciences must come unto here, or elsewhere: Here is a strait indeed.

But yet there is an enlargement; there is a way found out of bringing the soul out of the miry clay, and deep pit of misery; and it is this: God hath found out a ransom for himself, without our procurement, or consent, or knowledge: he hath provided a satisfaction to his justice in his Son Jesus Christ; having laid upon him our iniquities, he exacts of him our deserved punishment, and makes him a curse who knew no sin. Now this being done, the Lord sends forth to all poor sinners who are trembling at mount Sinai this proclamation, This is my last and most peremptory command, that ye believe in the name of my Son Jesus Christ. This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him. Have ye heard me, the lawgiver, condemning you? now go and hear him the Mediator and Saviour absolving you; for I have committed all judgment unto him; though I pronounce the sentence in this world against you, yet I have committed all the execution of it to him; and if you come to him you may prevent it. You have broken all my former commandments, and I have pronounced a sentence against you for that. But now I give a new commandment instead of all the former, which, if you obey, then the sentence of death is relaxed. You who cannot obey the law and give satisfaction in your own persons, I charge you to flee unto my son Christ, who hath given me full satisfaction, both to the curse by suffering, and to the command by obedience, and lay hold on his righteousness as your own, and in him ye are justified, and delivered from all those

sentences and hard writings against you. I give a new commandment as the cure and remedy of all broken commandments: Believe on this name, in which is salvation, take his obedience and suffering for your cure, and present me with that, I shall be as well satisfied as with your own personal satisfaction.

This now is a very plain business; all commands are broken, there is yet one published in the gospel to help all, and it is in substance, to embrace and welcome Jesus Christ for all, to seek our life and salvation in him, to take him as a priest to offer sacrifice for us, and expiate our sins; and to come to him as a prophet to seek wisdom and illumination, and all grace from him; to choose him as our king henceforth, to submit to his easy yoke of government. Now I say there will be no more debates about this: will ye yet dispute whether ye may believe or not, will ye enquire after this whether you have a warrant or not? truly such a question would occasion much jealousy and provocation among men. If a man had signified as much willingness by command, by invitation, by request, by frequent repetition of these, yet to call in question or dispute whether or not I may go to such a person, will he make me welcome? were it not the greatest affront I could put upon him, would it not alienate his affection more than any thing, to be jealous of his real kindness to me?

I would desire to hold out unto you the sin, the danger, and the vanity of such a way. I say the sin is great; it is no less than the highest and most heinous disobedience to the gospel, which, of all others, is of the deepest dye; you have disobeyed the law and broken all the ten commandments, and will ye therefore disobey the gospel too, and break this fundamental commandment? Is it not enough that ye have broken the rest, and will ye break this also, which was given for the cure of all?

Consider, I say, this is his commandment; now commandments should be obeyed, and not disputed, coming from an infallible and uncontrollable authority. Would

ye not silence all the rebellions of your hearts against the commands of praying, hearing, reading, dealing justly, and walking soberly, with this one word, It is his command, it is his sovereign will; and why do ye not see the stamp of that same authority upon this? Now if you consider it aright, it hath more authority upon it than upon others, because it is his last command, and so would be taken as most pungent and weighty. When your hearts rise up to question and dispute this matter, I pray you cut all these knotty objections with the sword of his commandment. You use to go about to loose them by particular answers, and untie them at leisure with art and skill; but truly it would be a readier and wiser course to cut them in pieces at one stroke, by this piercing and pungent precept. If your reasons and scruples be weighty, and you cannot get answers to overbalance them, I pray you put this weighty seal of divine authority into the balance, and sure I am it will weigh down all. Consider then the danger of it, it is the last and most peremptory command, after which you may expect no other but the execution of justice. How sad and severe is the certification, "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." There needs no new sentence to be pronounced against you; why, because if you believe not, that prior sentence of the law is yet standing above your heads to condemn you; that wrath abides on you; this is the only way to remove it, to come to him who hath taken it on himself. After the breach of all commands, ye have this retreat, this refuge to flee unto, a new command to come unto the Son and have life. But after this disobedience of the Son, you have none; there is nothing after unbelief, but ye are turned over, or rather left over in the hand of the law and divine justice; therefore it is the most dangerous and damnable thing to disobey this,—it is to refuse the very remedy of sin. Consider also what vanity and uselessness is in these debates; what an unreasonable and senseless thing is it to dispute against our own soul, and against our own happiness? all

is wrapt up here, and we do no less than the highest act of self-murder that can be. He that hateth me, wrongs his own soul; what an unreasonable thing then is it, because ye are miserable, to refuse mercy; because ye are unclean, therefore to maintain that ye are not to come to the blessed fountain of cleansing; because ye have broken the rest of the commands, therefore ye may not obey this! Is there any sense or reason in such things, because I am a sinner, therefore I will not come to a Saviour? Alas! to what purpose was the Son sent and given, and for what end came he? was it not to seek and to save such as are lost and undone, and to deliver them from misery? What do you gain by such questions? for at length you must turn and enter in at the door of a naked command; and promise, when you have wearied yourselves to find that in your hearts which is not in them, to seek waters in the wilderness and springs in the desert; qualifications and graces in your own hearts to warrant your boldness in coming to the promise: I say, when you have sought and all in vain, you must at length come to this fountain in which is all grace and happiness. If you had what you seek, yet if ye would indeed believe in Christ, you must deny them and look upon yourselves as ungodly, to be justified by faith. Why then do you grasp after that which can do you no good, (though you had it), I mean, in point of your acceptation. Consider it, my beloved, that the honour of God and your own happiness lies most in this, nay, not only that, but your holiness too, which you pretend to seek after, lies in it; till you come to Christ, it is in vain to seek it elsewhere.

III.

1 John iii. 23.—And this is his commandment, &c.

THERE are different tempers of mind among men, some more smooth and pliable, others more refractory and froward;

some may be persuaded by love, who cannot be constrained by fear; with some a request will more prevail than a command, others again of a harsher disposition, love and condescension doth rather embolden them; and therefore, they must be restrained with the bridle of authority. It would seem that the Lord hath some regard to this in the administration of the gospel; he accommodates himself to the diverse dispositions of men, and (if we may say with respect to him which yet can be no disrespect, seeing he hath humbled himself lower) he doth become all things to all men, that he may gain some. Ye see the gospel sometimes running in the channel of love and kindness, sometimes in the channel of authority and majesty. God sometimes stoopeth down to invite, and affectionately to beseech sinners to come unto his Son for life. He hath prepared a marriage and banquet for us in Christ: he hath made all things ready for the receiving, for the eating, and he sends forth his servants to intreat and invite all such who have no bread and clothing, who are poor and lame, to this wedding. He gives an hearty invitation to all that stand at an infinite distance from God, and so are feeding upon empty vanities without him, to come and enjoy the riches of his grace, which runs as a river in Christ between these two golden banks,—the pardon of sin, and the purification of our souls from its pollution. You have a hearty invitation, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters." But he comes yet lower, to request and obtest poor sinners, as if he could have advantage by it; he will not stand to be a supplicant at any man's door, to beseech him to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 14, 19, 20. As if we could do him a favour and benefit, he requests us most earnestly. Truly it is strange, that this doth not melt the heart, and make it fall down into the belief and obedience of the truth. Affection is the most insinuating and prevailing thing with an ingenuous spirit, most of all when it is accompanied with majesty in the person that hath it, and humility in the carriage and disposition; for a great personage to descend out of love, to af-

fectionate and humble requests and solicitations, this cannot but have a mighty influence on any spirit that is not wild and savage: but because the heart of man is desperately wicked, and hath lost that true ingenuity and nobleness of spirit, and is now become stubborn and froward, as a wild ass, or as a swift dromedary traversing her ways, therefore, the Lord takes another way of dealing with men suitable to their froward natures; he gives out his royal statute backed with majesty and authority; "This is his command," &c.; that when fair means could not prevail, other means more terrible might reduce lost rebellious men. He hedges in our way with threatenings and promises annexed to the commandment, "He that believeth hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not is condemned already, and shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." He declares all men traitors if they come not into his Son, to be reconciled to God, before the decree of wrath pass forth.

Truly, it is a wonder that there should be any need either of an invitation, or a request, or a command, or a threatening; that we should need to be invited, or requested, or commanded, or threatened to our own happiness. Might not a bare and simple offer, or proposal of Jesus Christ, his nature, and offices, of the redemption and salvation purchased by him, suffice? What needed more, but to declare unto us that we are lost and utterly undone by nature, and that there is a refuge and remedy provided in Christ? Surely in any other thing of little importance, we needed no intreaty; were it not a good enough invitation to a man that is like to starve for hunger, to cast meat freely before him; or to a man that is in hazard of drowning, to cast a cord to him? We would seek no other persuasion to go and dig for a treasure of gold, than to shew us where it is hid: but strange is the rebellious and perverse disposition of man's heart; what an enmity is in it to the ways of God! What strange inclination to self-murder, ever since man destroyed himself! we cannot express it unto you; but you may

perceive it well enough, both by the Lord's frequent obtesting and protesting to us in his word, and the experience of the great barrenness of all such means. Whence is it, I pray you, that there should need so many means to persuade you to that which is your own advantage, and to call you to shun the ways of destruction? And whence is it that notwithstanding of all those invitations, intreaties, commandments, promises, and threatenings often sounded in your ears, yet the most part are not reduced to obedience, nor reclaimed from the ways of death, and do not take hold of the path of life? Truly it may plainly point out to you, the desperate wickedness of the heart, the stubbornness and rebelliousness of our disposition; and if once we could persuade you of this, we had gained a great point which few do seriously consider, and so do not abhor themselves.

The commandments mentioned in the text are these two, To believe in Christ, and to love our brother. It is no wonder they are recommended with so much seriousness and earnestness; for they are both the most comprehensive, and the most pleasing commandments. They are most comprehensive; for it appears that all the commands spoken of in the preceding verse, are summed up in this one precept, "and this is his commandment," &c. And that they are most pleasant in God's sight is evident, for the true Christian being described from this, that he does those things which are pleasing in God's sight, that he is one that studies to conform himself to his good pleasure. This is subjoined as the two most pleasing exercises of Christianity, "This is his commandment," that is, his pleasing commandment, that ye should believe in Christ and love one another.

This command of believing in Jesus, is comprehensive, because it takes in all precepts, and that under a threefold consideration. It takes them all in as broken and transgressed by men, as fulfilled by Christ, and also takes them all in as a rule of righteousness according to which the believer ought henceforth to walk.

The command of believing in Christ doth first of all import this, that a sinner should examine himself according to the law of God, that he should lay his whole life and course, his heart and ways, down before the perfect and holy commandments, that he may stop his own mouth with shame and silence, and find himself guilty before God. Mercy uses to speak of humiliation preparatory to believing, and the work of the law preparatory to the gospel: but truly I conceive it would be more fitly expressed, if it were holden out thus, that it is one of the essential ingredients in the bosom of believing, and one of the first articles of the gospel-law, to charge all sinners to acknowledge their sin and misery, to discern their own abounding iniquity, and danger of perishing by it, how guilty they are before God, and how subject to his judgment, that so finding themselves undone, they may have recourse to a Saviour.

Truly the Spirit's work is to convince of sin, and then of righteousness; and when we are commanded to believe, the first part of our believing is crediting and subscribing to the law, to the justice and righteousness of God against us; and then the believing and acknowledging the gospel, is the end and purpose to that. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me;" this takes in completely the two books of saving faith towards God as a Law-giver and Judge, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, as a Saviour and Redeemer; and it doth but beget misapprehensions in many, when the one is looked upon as a condition without which we shall not be welcome to the other. Truly I think both are proposed as essentials of saving faith, none of them in such a way as to procure right and warrant to the other, but only in such an order as is suitable to any reasonable nature to be wrought upon, and that is all. It is only required of you, upon that account, because fleeing unto a Saviour for refuge, is a rational and deliberate action which necessarily includes the sense of misery without him. But the sense of sin and misery is not urged as one thing which ye should go about, to prepare and fit

yourselves for more welcome at Christ's hand, as commonly it is taken. Here it is easy to understand, how the command of believing belongs unto all who hear it, even to the vilest and grossest sinners who are yet stout, hard-hearted, and far from righteousness, Isa. xlvi. 12, those who are spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfies not; and those whose hearts are uncircumcised, and their lives profane: and yet the commandment of coming to the Son and believing on him for life, is extended unto them all; all are invited, requested, commanded, and threatened to this duty. There is no bar of exclusion set down in the gospel to hold out one, and let in another, as many suppose; those promises that sound condition-wise, are not limitations and restrictions of the right and warrant to persons to believing. Indeed, it is true all are not exhorted at the first hand to assurance of God's love, and an interest in Christ. There is no question that none have right to this seal, but them who have believed and set to their own seal to the character or truth of the word: but all are charged to believe in Christ, that is, out of a sense of their own lost estate to embrace a Saviour for righteousness and strength. Neither is there any fear that men can come too soon to Christ. We need not set down exclusions or extractions, for if they be not sensible of sin and misery, they will not certainly come to him at all; and therefore, the command that enjoins them to believe on the Son, charges them also to believe that they are lost without him: and if the most presumptuous sinners would once give obedience to this commandment, really there would be no fear of presumption in coming too soon unto Jesus. A sense of sin is not set as a porter, to keep out any who are willing to come in; but rather to open the door, and constrain them that were unwilling to enter in; so that if the least measure of that can do this, we are not to stand till we have more, but to come to the prince exalted to get remission of sins, and more true gospel sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation from dead

works. You would not therefore understand any promises in the Scriptures, so as if there were any conditions set down to seclude any from coming, who are willing to come; for they do but declare the nature and manner of what they are invited to, that no man mistake believing, and take his own empty presumptions or fancies which embolden him to sin more, for that true faith which is full of good fruits.

Now in the text the pious soul having once subscribed to the guilt and curse of all the commandments, by believing the law, looks also upon the Son, Jesus Christ, and finds the law fulfilled, the curse removed, all satisfied in him. He finds all the commandments obeyed in his person, all the wrath due for the breach of them pacified and quenched by his sufferings. And he gives a cheerful and cordial approbation of all this; he receives Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, which Christ made up by obedience and suffering to supply our disobedience. We should stay or rest upon this, as that which pacifies the Father's wrath to the full. This is what gives the answer of a good conscience, and pacifies every penitent soul, and secures his title to heaven. Now this presents God with a full atonement and obedience to all the law, which he accepts from a believer as if it were his own. This is the large comprehension of believing, it takes in its arms, as it were, in one bundle all the precepts and curses, and devolves them over on Christ, puts them in an able hand, and then takes them all as satisfied and fulfilled by him, and holds them up in one bundle to the Father.

And hence it proceeds, in the third place, that believing on the Son takes in all again, to be the rule of walking, and the mark to aim at. Finding such a perfect exoneration of bygones in Christ, and standing in such favour with God, the soul is sweetly constrained to love and delight in the divine laws; and truly this is the natural result of faith. I wish you may rightly observe this conjunction, that this is inseparably knit with it; love to God

and men, delight to do his will, to love him, and live unto him. Do not deceive yourselves with vain words; if you find not the smartness of the gospel, and the doctrine of grace laying this restraint upon the heart, ye are yet in your sins. This is the reasoning of a believing soul, Shall I who am dead unto sin, live any longer therein? Shall I not delight in those commandments, when Christ hath delivered me from the curse of the law? Though such a one fall, and come short, yet the pressure of the heart is that way. But then attend unto the order; ye must first believe on the Son, and then love him, and live unto him. Ye must first flee unto his righteousness, and then the righteousness of the law shall be wrought in you. Therefore do not weary yourselves to no purpose; do not wrong your own souls by seeking to prevent this order, which was established for your joy, and salvation. Know that you must first meet with satisfaction in all the commands of Christ, before obedience to any of them be accepted; and having met with that, know that the sincere endeavour of thy soul, and the affectionate bensal [*i. e.* bent or inclination] of thy heart to thy duty, is accepted. And if ye find yourselves thereafter surcharged with guilt and unanswerable walking, yet ye know the way is to begin at this again, to believe in the Son. This is the round you must walk, as long as ye are in the body; when you are defiled run into the fountain, and when you are washed, study to keep your garments clean; but if defiled again, get your hearts washed from wickedness. These things, says John, "I write to you, that you sin not, who believe, but if any sin," who desire not to transgress, "you have a propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

Now love is a very comprehensive command; it is the fulfilling of the whole law, Rom. xiii. 10. Matt. xxii. 37, 38.; it is indeed the true principle and pure fountain of our obedience unto God and men. All fruits of the Spirit are moral virtues that grow out of the believer; whether pleasant unto God, or refreshing unto men, they

are all virtually in this root of love, all the streams are compacted in this fountain, therefore he names one for all, viz. brotherly-love, which is the bond of perfection, Col. iii. 14. It is a bundle of many divine graces, a company or society of many Christian virtues combined together. They are named bowels of mercies, long-suffering, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness, all which are tied to the believer's girdle by charity; so that where love is, every good comes: after it a troop of so many sweet endowments and ornaments also come; and where this is wanting, (as truly it is the epidemical disease of the time) there are many sins abounding; for when "iniquity abounds the love of many shall wax cold," Matth. xxiv. 12. O that is our temper, or rather our distempered nature,—love cold, and passion hot. When charity goes away, these wild and savage beasts of darkness come forth, viz. bitter envying and strife, rigid censuring and judging, unmercifulness and implacableness of spirit, upon others' failings and offences, self-love that keeps the throne, and all the rest are her attendants: for where self-love and pride is, there is contention, strife, envy, and every evil work, and all manner of confusion; thus they lead one another as in a chain of darkness, Prov. xiii. 10. James iii. 16. Think not that love is a complimental word, and an idle motion of loving, it is a more real thing, a more vital thing,—it hath bowels of mercy; they move themselves when others are moved, and they bring their neighbour's misery into the inmost seat of the heart, and make the spirit a solemn companion in misery; and it is also exercised in forbearing and forgiving. "Charity is not easily provoked," therefore it can forbear, is easily appeased; therefore it can forgive, it is not soon displeased, or hard to be pleased, forbearing and forgiving one another in love. Study then, this grace more, see it to be the fulfilling of the law; for the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. The end of the law is not strife and debate, nor such intricate

and perplexed matters, as minister endless questions, and no edification; though men pretend conscience and Scripture, yet the great end of both is violated, that is, charity, which mainly studies edification in truth and love. And therefore it is a violent perversion of the commandment, or word, to overstretch every point of conscience or difference, so far as to the renting of Christian peace and unity. What hath kindled all these flames of bloody war, what hath increased all these fiery contentions among us, but the want of this? As James says of the tongue, so I may speak of uncharitableness and self-love,—they set on fire the course of nature, and they are set on fire of hell. The true zeal and love of God is like that elementary fire of which they speak, that in its own place hath a temperate heat, and doth not burn or consume what is about it. But our zeal is like the fire that is mixed with some gross matter, a preying, devouring, and consuming thing. Zeal down in the lower region of man's heart, is mixed with many gross corruptions, which are as oil and fuel to it, and give it an extreme intemperate destroying nature.

But then consider, that this commandment of love is our Lord and Saviour's last testamentary injunction to his disciples, John xiii. 34, 35, 36. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is Christ's latter-will, and given us as a token and badge of discipleship. Every profession hath its own signs and rules: every order their own symbol, every rank their own character; here is the differential or peculiar character and livery of a Christian,—brotherly-love, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," &c. I remember a story of a dying father, who called his sons to him on his death-bed, and having sent for a bundle of arrows, he tried them one by one, if they could break them; and when they had all tried this in vain, he caused

loose the bundle, and take the arrows one by one, and so they were easily broken; by which he gave them to understand, that their stability and strength would consist in unity and concord; but if love and charity were broken, they were exposed to great hazard. I think our Lord and Saviour gives such a precept unto his disciples at his departure out of this world,—"a new command I give unto you," &c. John xiii. 34—to shew them that the perfection of the body, into which they were all called as members, consisted in that bond of charity. And indeed love is not only a bond or bundle of perfection in respect of graces, but in regard of the church too; it is that bond or tye which knits all the members into one perfect body, Col. iii. 14, 15, 16. Without this bond all must needs be rents, rags, and distractions.

Now I shall add but one word of the other, that these commands are pleasing in God's sight; and truly believing in the Son must be grateful to him, not only from the general nature of obedience to his will, but also because this doth most honour both to the Father and to the Son. The Father counts himself much honoured when we honour the Son; and there is no honour the creature can be in a capacity to give unto him like this,—to cast all our hope, and hang all our happiness upon him, John v. 23, 24; to set to our seal that he is true and faithful, John iii. 33, which is done by believing. But most of all this is pleasing in his sight, because the Father's good pleasure concentres in the same point with the soul's good pleasure, that is, on the well beloved Son Christ, therefore faith must needs be well-pleasing to the Father; for what is faith else but the soul's complacency and satisfaction in the Son? As the Father is already well-pleased with his death and sufferings, so he propones and holds him out in the gospel, that you may be as well-pleassd with him as he is. This is believing indeed, to be pleased with him, as the Father is pleased; and this pleases the Father too. O! that you could understand this; the gospel is not brought unto you, that you may reconcile

God, and procure a change in his affection, but for this end—to beseech you to be reconciled unto God, to take away all hostile affections out of your heart; and this is the business we have to do,—to persuade you that the Father holds him abundantly contented with his Son, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And to move you to be as well contented with him as he is, hear him: I hear him for you, hear ye him for me; I hear him interceding for you, hear ye him beseeching you. Now this may take down all ground of jealousy concerning our welcome and acceptance, it cannot but be an acceptable and pleasing thing to God, that the affection and desire of the soul fall in and embosom itself with his good pleasure upon Christ his Son.

And then, in the next place, it is well-pleasing to God that ye love one another, not only because he shall see his own image and likeness in your love,—for there is nothing in which a Christian more eminently resembles his Father, or more evidently appears to be a child of the Highest, than in free loving all, especially the household of faith, and forbearing and forgiving one another, and so he cannot choose but like it well,—but especially because your love concentres too, and meets upon the same object with his love: those, whom the Father so loved, that he gave his only-begotten Son, and the Son so loved them, that he gave himself for them. If these be thy delight, and thou forbear them as the Father and the Son hath done, that conspiracy of affections into one point cannot but be pleasing unto him. Now if these please him so well, whom should they not please?

IV.

James iii. 14.—But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, &c.

It is a common evil of those who hear the gospel, that they are not delivered up to the mould and frame of religion that is holden out in it, but rather they bring religion into a mould of their own invention. It was the special commendation of the Romans, "that they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which they were delivered," Rom. vi. 17. That they who were once servants, or slaves of sin, had now become voluntary captives of truth, and had given themselves up to the gospel, to be modelled and fashioned by it; and if so then, certainly, the most substantial points of religion would be most deeply engraven upon them. Every thing would have its own due place with us, if we were cast in the primitive mould of godliness; but when we cast godliness in a mould of our own apprehension, they cannot choose but a miserable confusion and disorder will follow in the duties of religion; for according as our fancy and inclination imposes a necessity upon things, so we do pursue them, and not according to the real weight that is in them. I find the Scripture laying most weight upon the most common things, placing most religion in the most obvious and known things; and for other things more remote from common capacity, I find them set far below in the point of worth and moment, even those things that seem least. But I find that order quite perverted in the course of Christians: some particular points that are not so obvious to every understanding, are put in the first place, and made the distinguished character of a Christian; and others again, in which true and undefiled religion doth more consist, are despised and set in a low place, because of their ceremonies. I think this apostle hath observed this confusion, and hath applied himself to

remove it, by correcting the misapprehensions of Christians, and reducing their thoughts and ways to the frame of true Christianity. Even as Christ dealt with the Pharisees, who brought in such a confusion in religion, by imposing a necessity upon ceremonies, and an indifferency upon the very substance itself; truly I think it may be said unto us, "You tithe mint, anise, and cummin, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these things ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Ye neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, faith and truth; and in the room of these ye have misplaced things that are higher in God's esteem from an apprehension of their necessity. Thus by your traditions and opinions of things so remote from the kingdom of God, ye have made the unquestionable commandments of God of none effect," Matt. xv. 6.

You think possibly, if this apostle was coming out to preach unto you this day, that he would certainly resolve you in many controverted points, and would bring some farther light to the debates of the time. But truly I think, if he knew the temper of our spirits, he would preach over this sermon to us again—"My brethren, be not many masters," &c. I suppose he would bring that old primitive light of pure and undefiled religion, the splendour of which our present ways and courses could not endure, but would be constrained to hide themselves in darkness. What would you think of such a sermon as this? "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain." James i. 26. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man," James iii. 2. This is accounted a common and trivial purpose, but believe it, sirs, the Christian practice of the most common things hath more religion in it than the knowledge of the profoundest things; and till you learn to do what you know, it is a mockery to study to know further what to do. There is a strange stirring of mind after more light and knowledge in some particulars of the time, but I would fain know, if there be as much ardour and endea-

vour to practise that which we have already: To him that hath shall be given,—to him that makes use of his knowledge for the honour of God, and the good of mankind, and their edification, more shall be given; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath, and yet really and cordially he hath not, because he hath no use of it, therefore, he may by inquiry find more darkness; but his old light shall rather be put out. Do you not all know, that ye should bridle your tongues, that it is a great point of that Christian victory over the world, to tame and daunt that undaunted wild beast, to quench that fire-brand of hell? Do ye not all know, that we should be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath: and as the apostle Paul speaks on another subject, "Doth not even nature itself teach you," when you have but one tongue, and two ears, that ye should hear much, and speak little? Are not our ears open, and our tongue inclosed and shut up, to teach us to be more ready to hear than to speak. Now, I say, till Christians learn to practise those things that are without all controversy, you may make it your account never to want controversy, and never to get clearness; for to what purpose should more light be revealed, when that which is revealed is to no purpose?

But it is in vain to think to reform the tongue, till you have the heart first reformed; they say the belly hath no ears; truly the tongue is all tongue, and has no ears to take an admonition or instruction; we must then, with the apostle, retire unto the heart, and abate from the abundance of the superfluity and naughtiness that is within; and therefore our apostle descends to the cure of pride, envy, and strife in the heart, that are fountains of all that pestiferous flood which flows out of every man's mouth. "Is there any wise man among you?" &c. And indeed this is the orderly proceeding both of nature and grace; nature begins within to probe among the superfluous and noisome humours which abound in the body, and desolate the members, and doth not think it sufficient

to apply external plasters. Grace must begin within too, to purge the heart, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, the eye looks, and the feet walk. If there be no destroyer in the members or outward man, it is not the prescribing of rules and cautions that will suffice to restrain, to abate, or to cure, but the disease must be ripped up to the bottom—the cause found within, as our apostle doth here; hence, says he, proceed all these feverish distempers among you—your hot and passionate words—your evil speakings and reproachings—your contentions and wars about matters either civil or religious; whence are all these?—from a vain persuasion of wisdom—from a foolish imagination of some excellency in yourselves, and some inward affection to be accounted something of among men. "Who is a wise man?" &c.; you would be accounted wise, and so you do account yourselves; and this begets strife and envy in the heart, and predisposeth the mind to strife and contention with others. And therefore he takes the mask off, by deciphering the very nature of such a wisdom; he embowels that pretended wisdom in religion, and gives it its own name; and because things are best known and most livelily comprehended in their opposition and comparison with one another, he shews wherein true wisdom and religion consists, and sets the one against the other, that the deformity of the one and the beauty of the other may appear. We shall then speak a word of this that is supposed; and then of that which is expressed—the descriptions of true wisdom, and pretended wisdom. I conceive this interrogation, "Is there a wise man among you?" imports chiefly these two; one is, That it is the natural disease of all men to esteem themselves something, and desire to be esteemed such by others; another is, That the misapprehension of that wherein true wisdom and excellency doth especially consist, is the ground of many miscarriages in the seeking or venting of that.

It was an ancient remark, "That vain man would be wise, though he be born like a wild ass's colt." Empty

man is wise in his own eyes, and would be so in other men's too; he hath no reality nor solidity, but is like those light things which the wind carries away, or the waters bear above, and toss hither and thither; yet he apprehends some solid and real worth in himself, and would impose that apprehension upon others. And truly this is a drunkenness of mind, which makes a man light and vain, to stagger to and fro; it is a giddiness of spirit that makes him inconstant and reeling, but insensible of it. Though he be born as stupid and void of any real wisdom and excellency as a wild ass's colt, yet he hath this madness and folly superadded to all that natural stupidity, that he seems to be wise and understanding; and truly it was a more ancient disease than Job's days: we may trace the steps of its antiquity to be from the very beginning, and there we shall find the true original of it. What was it, I pray you, did cast the angels out of heaven down to the lowest hell, to be reserved in chains for everlasting darkness? I do not conceive what their natures, so abstracted from all sensual lusts, could be capable of, but this spiritual darkness and madness of self-conceit, and an ambitious aspiring after more wisdom; whence did flow that malcontent and envious humour in maligning the happiness of man. And this was the poison that Satan, the chief of these angels, did drop into man's nature, by temptations and suggestions of an imaginary wisdom and happiness,—"You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And truly this poison is so strong and pestilent, that having once entered into the body, it spreads through all the members; it infects all the posterity that were in Adam's loins. Being once distilled into the lump it diffuses itself through the whole,—such a strange contagion is it; that wretched aim at a higher wisdom hath thrown us all down into this brutish and stupid condition, to be like wild ass's colts. Yet this false and fond imagination of wisdom and excellence remains within us, which is so much the nearer madness, that now there is no apparent ground left for such a fairly [*i. e.* fancy, in-

fatuation, or unreal subject of wonder]. And if one of a cubit's height should imagine himself as tall as a mountain, and accordingly labour to stretch out himself, we would seek no other sign of madness; truly this malignant and poisonable humour is so subtle, that it hath insinuated itself into all the parts and powers of the soul, and steals in, without observation, into all our thoughts, purposes, affections, ways, and courses; it is of so infectious and pestiferous a nature, that it defiles all that is in the man, and all that comes out of the man.

The apostle speaks of covetousness, that it is the root of all evil; truly I think that comprehends many inordinate affections in it. Now, both self-love and earth-love, which arises from some false imagination of that which is not; whether it be an imagination of some excellency in ourselves, or some worth in these worldly and earthly things, man first makes a god of it, and then worships it. Therefore covetousness is called idolatry, self-idolatry, and earth-idolatry. We first attribute some divinity to ourselves, like those people, Isa. xliv. 17, to their idols: we then fall down and worship ourselves; but we do not consider in our heart that we are but dust: and then we ascribe some divinity to the perishing things of the world, and then worship them; but do not consider that they are earthly and perishing vanities. Thus we feed upon ashes; a deceived heart hath turned us aside, and we cannot deliver our own souls by discovering the lie that is in our right hand. We feed partly on the element of the air, by seeking that of others that we have of ourselves; and partly upon the element of the earth, by the love of this world; and these two degenerated evils are the root of all evils, self-estimation, and creature-affection.

I think this apostle, in this one word, "Is there any wise man among you," or any endowed with knowledge? and that word, "glory not," strikes at the root of all the forementioned and aftermentioned evils: from whence, I say, doth that promptitude and bensal [*i.e.* propensity] to speak, that slowness and difficulty to hear, that readiness and incli-

nation to pride reproved, James i. 19, 20, proceed? Is it not from an overweening conceit of our own wisdom, that we are so swift to speak, and so slow to hear, and that we would teach others, and yet be taught of none? We are so much in love with our own apprehensions, that we imagine they shall find as much esteem and affection among men; and so being like barrels full of liquor in our own conceit, we are like to burst, if we vent not, and are as uncapable of taking from others, as of retaining what is within. The word of God was a fire in Jeremiah's heart, that would have consumed him, if he had not given it vent. Truly self-love is a fire that must vent one way or other, or it would burn up all within, by displeasure; and then it is the over-apprehension of some excellency in ourselves, which so disposes us to anger, that makes us combustible matter, like the spirit of gunpowder; for the least spark of injury or offence will set all in a flame. It is certainly the fond imagination of some great worth in ourselves, that is the very immediate predisposition to the apprehension of an injury. Humility cannot be be affronted, it is hard to persuade of an injury; why? because there is no excellency to be hurt or wronged; therefore Christ conjoins these, "Meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29, lays poverty of spirit down as the foundation of meekness, Matt. v. 3, 4, 5. Whence is it that we accept of men's persons by judging according to the outward appearance, and are so ready to displease our brethren, especially those who are inferior to us in body, or mind, or estate? is it not from this root, self-admiration? This makes us elevate ourselves above others, and to intrude ourselves among those who are chiefest in account. Whence doth our unmercifulness and rigidity towards other men proceed, but from this fountain? That we allow so much licence and indulgence to ourselves, that we can have none to spare for others; and that we do not consider that we ourselves stand in need of more mercy from God, and cannot endure a mixture of judgment in it; therefore we have judgment to others without

mercy, James ii. 13. And is not this self-pleasing humour the fountain of that contentious plea after the pre-eminence, and censorious liberty of judging others, and usurping authority over them? James iii. 1, "My brethren, be not ye many masters." Truly this is the root of all contentions and strifes; it is this which rents all human and Christian society; this looses all the pins of concord and unity; this sets all by the ears, and makes all the wheels reel through other. The conceit of some worth beyond others, and the imagination of some pre-eminence over them, even in the best creatures,—he best, and he best, that is the plea; he greatest, and he greatest, that is the controversy; as bladders puffed up with wind, they cannot be kept in little room, but every one presses another; but if the wind were out, they would compact in less room, and comply better together. The apostle implies this, when he puts every man in mind of his own failing, "in many things we offend all;" and if this were considered, it would abate our security, and cool our heat and fervour, and moderate our rigour towards others. There would not be such strife about places of power and trust, if we were not swelled in our own apprehensions to some eminency. And is not this the very fountain which sends out all those bitter streams of the tongue, those evil-speakings one of another, those sharp and immoderate censures of our neighbours? truly this is it,—every man accounts himself to be wiser, and more religious than his brother, to have more knowledge, and so he cannot endure any difference in opinion; to have more holiness, and so he cannot bear any infirmity in practice. But the way to help this would be to humble ourselves before God, James iv. 10,—lowliness and meekness are the ground stones of those Christian virtues which preserve Christian society, Eph. iv. 2, 3. And is not this, I pray you, the foundation of wars, strifes, contentions, and jealousies? "From whence come wars and fightings among you;" is it not from those imperious lusts which war in our members? "Only from pride cometh

contention," Prov. xiii. 10; the head-spring of all envy also issues out from pride, and this divides into many streams and waters all our courses and ways with putrified and pestilent corruptions, while every man hath this opinion of himself; all is done in strife, no condescendence, no submission one to another, Phil. ii. 3. While all make themselves the centre, it cannot otherwise happen, but designs, courses, thoughts, and ways, must interfere and jar among themselves; self-seeking puts all by the ears, as you see children among themselves, if an apple be cast to them. Any bait or advantage of the times yokes them in that childish contention, who shall have it; all come, strive, and fight about it, and it is but a few can have it, and those that get it cannot keep it long, others will catch it from them. Now what vain things are these, which can neither be gotten nor kept but by strife? O that we could seek better things, which may be both sought and kept without emulation or strife!

Now the other thing is, that the misapprehension of that wherein true excellence consists is the ground of many evils. "Who is a wise man?" &c. You all affect the title, and ye seek the thing, as ye suppose, but alas, ye mistake that wherein it consists; truly there is in all men (ever since we tasted of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) a strange innate desire of knowledge, and affectation of wisdom, and desire of excellence; but since the first endeavour in paradise succeeded ill, there hath nothing gone well since: we weary ourselves to catch vanities, shadows, and lies." "How long, O ye sons of men, will ye love vanity, and follow after lies?" That divinely taught prophet could not but pity the children of men; and as Paul speaks to the Athenians of another purpose—"Him whom ye ignorantly worship, we declare unto you;" so he declares unto men that which they ignorantly and vainly seek elsewhere. This, I assure you, consists in this,—that ye shew out of a good conversation your works with meekness and wisdom.

All our mischief proceeds from this, that we misappre-

hend and mistake that which we would gladly have, and so once being in the wrong way, that cannot lead to our purposed end, so the faster we run, the further we go from it; the more we move in affection and diligence, the less we indeed promove in reality to the attaining what we seek. How greatly have we fallen! I might instance this in many things, but I shall be content with these two. There is a desire in all men after happiness, but there is a fundamental error in the imagination, supposing it to consist in the enjoyment of temporal pleasure, honour, advantage, or the satisfaction of our own natural inclinations. Now this leads all mankind to a pursuit after these things; but how base a scent is it! and how vain a pursuit is it! For the faster they move in that way, the further they are from all solid and true contentment. Again, in all godly men, there is something of this rectified, and they suppose religion to be the only true wisdom, and this wisdom the only true happiness; but oftentimes there are even mistakes in that too. As many of the world call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet, because of the vitiated and corrupted palate, so the godly, being in some measure distempered, call that which is not so sweet sweetest, and that which is not so bitter, bitterest; they change the value of things, and misplace them out of that order in which God hath set them. One great mistake is this—we impose a great deal of weight and moment upon those things in religion, which are but the hay and stubble, or pins in the building; and we esteem less that wherein the foundation and substance of true religion consists. We have an over-apprehension of a profession, and an undervaluing thought of practice; we overstretch some points of knowledge and truth of the least value; and have less value for the fundamental statutes of the gospel,—faith and love, mercy and judgment. This our Saviour reproved in the Pharisees. "I will have mercy," says God, "and not sacrifice;" a ceremony of opinion in some particulars of the time, hath more necessity with us than the practice of true godliness: and this is the root

of the most part of those vain janglings, strifes of words, and perverse disputings of men, whereof cometh envy, strife, malice, evil surmisings, and no edification in faith and love, which were so frequent in the primitive times, and so often hammered down by Paul. This is it,—a misapprehension of the value of them. Fancy imposes a worth and necessity upon them; but Paul doth always oppose unto them true godliness, 1 Tim. vi. 3; chap. iv. 7; and prescribes that as the cure, that true godliness in practice of what we know, and charity towards our brethren, may be bigger in our apprehension and higher in our affection. Would ye then know, my brethren, wherein true religion consists, and wherein genuine Christianity stands? it is "in shewing out of a good conversation, our works with meekness and wisdom." I reduce it to these two words, in joining practice to knowledge, and meekness to both; and this makes our religion to shine before men, and glorify our heavenly Father.

Wherein, then, do ye think this mystery of wisdom which the gospel reveals consists? Not in the profound and abstracted speculations of God, or the secrets of nature—a work about which learned men have racked their inventions, and beaten their brains to no other purpose than the discovery of the greatness of man's ignorance. It doth not consist in the sounding of the depths of divinity, and loosing all those perplexed knots of questions and doubts, which are moved upon the Scripture, in all which men really betray their own ignorance and misery.

"The world by wisdom knew not God." Living right is the first point of true wisdom, which costs many men great expences to learn,—to know their own folly,—to become fools, that they may become wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18. Man became a fool by seeking to become wiser than God made him; and that is all the result of our endeavours after wisdom since, Rom. i. 22. But here is the great instruction of Christianity,—to bring men down low from the height of presumption and self estimation, and make him see himself just as he is by nature, a fool, and a wild

ass's colt. Nebuchadnezzar had much ado to learn this lesson; it cost him some years' brutality to learn to know his brutishness, and when that was known then his understanding returned to him.

Now this is the first and hardest point of wisdom. When it is once learned and imprinted on the heart, O what a docility is in the mind to more! what readiness to receive what follows! It makes a man a weaned child, a little simple child, tractable and flexible as Christ would have all his disciples A man thus emptied and vacuated of self-conceit; those lines of natural pride being blotted out, the soul is as a *tabula rasa*, an unwritten table, to receive any impression of the law of God that he pleases to put on it; and then his words are all "plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge," Prov. viii. 9. Then, I say, it is not difficult to understand, and "to prove what is the good and acceptable will of God," Rom. xii. 2; Eph. v. 10—17. It is not up unto heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall ascend to bring it down? neither is it far down in the depth, that thou shouldest say, who shall descend and bring it up from hence? But it is near thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, &c. Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what is required of thee; to do justly, to show mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," Micah vi. 8. There is the plain sign of Christian wisdom; the abridgment of all that is taught in the school of Christ: here is the course of moral philosophy—"the grace of God hath appeared to teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world." And when the scholar is brought along by these degrees, he is at length laureated in that great day of our Saviour's appearance; then he hath the degree of glory and immortality conferred upon him. He is a candidate of immortality and felicity, Tit. ii. 12, 13.

We are in the Christian school like many scholars who labour to know so many things, that indeed they know

nothing well; as the stomach that devours much meat, but digests little, and turns it not into food and aliment, incorporates it not into the body. We catch at many great points of truth, and we really drink in none of them; we let none sink into the heart, and turn into affection and practice. This is the grand disease of the time,—a study to know many things, and no study to love what we know, or practise any thing. The Christian world is all in a flame, and the church is rent asunder by the eager pursuit and prosecution of some points of truth; and this is the clamour of all men, Who will shew us our light? who will discover some new thing unto us? But, in the meantime, we do not prove the unquestionable acceptable will of our God, like a fastidious squeamish stomach that loathes what it receives, and always longs for something else. Thus the evil is vented here, Who is a wise man, do ye think? Not he who knows many things, who hath still a will to controversy, who hath attained some further light than others of them; not so, brethren, but he that "shews out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom; he that proves and practiseth as well as knows the good-will of God." "For hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," 1 John ii. 3, 4. This proves that knowledge is not in the head, but in the heart, and that it is not captivated and shut up in the mind, but that a man is delivered up as a captive to the truth, Rom. vi. 16.

All men complain of the want of light and knowledge, though perhaps none think they have much: But is the will of God so dark and intricate? Is it so hard to understand? Truly it is plain,—he hath shewed thee what is good, he hath shewed thee what to do; but that thou neglectest to do, and therefore men know not what to do further: Do ye not all know that ye should walk soberly, righteously, and piously, and humble yourselves to walk with God, and in lowliness of mind each should

esteem another better than himself? ye should forbear and forgive one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you; ye should not seek great things for yourselves, especially when God is plucking up what he hath planted, and casting down what was built: ye should mind your country above more, and live as sojourners here. Are not these words of wisdom all plain and obvious to the meanest capacity? Now, my beloved, with what face can ye seek more knowledge of God, or enquire for more light into his mind, when you do not prove that known and perfect will of his; when you do not occupy your present talent, why do ye seek more? "To him that hath shall be given." Truly it is the man that fears and obeys, as far as is revealed, to whom God shews his secret, and teaches the way he should choose, Psal. xxv. 12. I know not a readier way to be resolved in doubtful things, than to study obedience in those things that are beyond all doubt. To walk in the light received, is the high way to more light. But what hope is there of any more light from the Lord, when our ways, and courses, and dispositions, and practices, even in our endeavours after more knowledge, cannot endure the light of that shining will of God that is already revealed. In ordering our conversation, we catch at the shadow of our points of truth, and lose the substance that was in our hands,—lowliness, meekness, charity, long-suffering, sobriety of mind and actions, and heavenly mindedness; all these substantials we let go, that we may get hold of some empty unedifying notions; we put out our candle that is already enlightened, that is, the knowledge of good conversation, that we may seek more light, and that is the way to find darkness and delusion: "because they received not the truth in love, that they might be saved, God gave them up to strong delusions and the belief of lies," 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. There is the ground of delusions,—truth received, but not loved or obeyed; many things known, but the stamp and seal not impressed on the heart, we express in the conversation; therefore God is provoked to put out

that useless light of truth, and deliver that man captive to delusions, who would not deliver his soul a captive to truth. And is not this righteousness, that he who detained the known truth in unrighteousness of affection and conversation, he himself detained and incarcerated by strong delusions of mind and imagination.

As a good conversation and good works should be joined to knowledge, and meekness must be the ornament of both; this meekness of wisdom is the great lesson, that the Wisdom of the Father came down to teach man, "Learn of me, for I am meek;" and truly the meekness of that substantial Wisdom of God Jesus Christ, is the exact pattern and copy, and the most powerful motive and constraint to this kindness of Christian wisdom. Our Saviour did "not cry nor lift up his voice in the streets," he made little noise, nor cried with pomp, he was not rigorous, nor rigid upon sinners; though he "was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; being reviled, he reviled not again; being cursed, he blessed;" though he could have legions of angels at his command, yet he would shew rather an example of patience and meekness to his followers, than overcome his enemies. If many of us, who pretend to be his disciples, had the winds, rains, heavens, and elements at our commandment, I fear we would have burned up the world; we would presently have called for fire from heaven to devour all whom we conceived enemies to him or ourselves, and that under the notion of zeal. Zeal it is indeed, but such as is spoken of in the next verse, "If ye have bitter envying (the word is bitter zeal) in your hearts, glory not, nor lie against the truth." Christ's zeal was sweet zeal; it might well consume or eat him up within, but it did not devour others without: "The zeal of thy house," says he, "hath eaten me up." But our zeal is like the Babylonian furnace that burnt and consumed those that went to throw the pious children into it; at the first approaching it gets without the chimney, and devours all around it. If the meekness or gentleness of a

person who received the greatest injuries that ever any received, and to whom the greatest indignities were done, and who endured the greatest contradiction of sinners; if his calm composed temper do not soften our spirits, mitigate our sharpness, and allay our bitterness, I know not what can do it. I do not think but if any man considered how much long-suffering God exercises towards him, how gentle and patient he is after so many provocations; how Jesus Christ doth still forgive infinite numbers of infinite wrongs done to his grace; how slow he is to wrath, and easy to be entreated; surely such a man would abate much of his severity towards others: he would pursue peace with all men, and esteem little of wrongs done unto him, and not think them worthy of remembrance; he would not be easily provoked, but he would be easily pacified. In a word, he could not but exercise something of that gentleness and meekness in forbearing and forgiving, as Christ also forgave him: and truly there is no ornament of a man like that of a meek and quiet spirit, 1 Pet. iii. 4; it is both comely and precious; it is of great price in God's sight; it is a spirit all composed and settled; all peace and harmony within; it is like the heavens in a clear day, all serene and beautiful: whereas an unmeek spirit is for the most part like the troubled sea, tossed with tempests, winds, and dashed with rains; even at the best it is but troubled with itself; when there is no external provocation, it hath an inward unrest in its bosom, and casts out mire and dirt. Meekness is so beseeming every man, that it is even humanity itself. It is the very nature of a man restored, and those brutish, wild, and savage dispositions put off. Meekness is a man in the true likeness of God; but passion, and the evils which accompany it, is a man metamorphosed and transformed into the nature of a beast, and that of a wild beast too. It hath been always reckoned that anger is nothing different from madness, but in the continuance of it,—it is a short madness; but what is wanting in the continuance is made up in the frequency; when spirits are inclined to it, there is

a habitual fury and madness in such spirits. It is no wonder then, these are conjoined,—meekness and wisdom, for truly they are inseparable; meekness dwells in the bosom of wisdom: it is nothing else but wisdom, reason, and religion ruling all within, and composing all the distempered lusts and affections; "but anger rests in the bosoms of fools," it cannot get rest but in a fool's bosom; for where it enters, wisdom and reason must go out, Eccles. vii. 9. "A fool's wrath is presently known," Prov. xii. 16. For if there were so much true and solid wisdom as to examine the matter first, and to consider before we suffer ourselves to be provoked, we would certainly quench anger in the very first smoking of an apprehension of a wrong, we would immediately cast it out; for there is nothing so much blinds and dimmeth the eye of our understanding; and when this gross vapour rises out of the dunghill of our lusts, nothing so much uncovers our shame and nakedness. "A prudent man covereth shame," but hastiness and bitterness takes the garment off our infirmity, and exposes us to mockery and contempt, Prov. xii. 16. There is not a greater evidence of a strong solid spirit than this,—to be able to govern this unruly passion, whereas it is taken far otherwise; meekness is construed by some to be simplicity and weakness; and many imagine some greatness and height of spirit in the hotter natures; but truly it is far otherwise: "For he that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his own spirit, that he than takes a city." Wrath is an impotency and weakness; it hath no strength in it, but such as ye would find in madmen: but this is true magnanimity,—to overcome thyself, and "overcome evil with good."

As there is nothing which is a greater evidence of wisdom, so there is nothing a better help to true wisdom than this; for a meek spirit is like a clear running fountain, that ye see the bottom of; but a passionate spirit is like a troubled fountain,—the shadow of truth cannot be seen in it: a glass that is pure and cleanly renders the image lively; but if it be besmeared with dust, you can

see nothing: so is a composed mild spirit apt to discern the truth without prejudice; and indeed it is the meek whom God engages to teach his ways, Psal. xxv. 8, 9. He that receives with meekness the ingrafted word, is in the readiest capacity to receive more; when the superfluity of naughtiness is cast out, and all the faculties of the soul composed to quietness and calmness, there his voice will best be heard, and himself readiest to receive it. Our affection keeps a continual hurry within the tumultuous noise of our disordered lusts, that are always raging and controlling the voice of God, so that we cannot hear his teaching. A passionate temper of spirit is very indocile,—there are so many loud sounds of prejudices within, that the truth cannot be heard; but a meek spirit hath all quietness and silence, as Cornelius and his house had waiting for the mind of the Lord. And such he delights to converse with most, and reveal most unto; for it gets readiest entertainment. Let me tell you, beloved in the Lord, you disoblige the Lord, if I may speak so, and hinder him to reveal any more of his mind to you; ye disengage him to teach you his way in those dark and untrodden paths, because ye do not study this meekness in the wisdom and knowledge ye have already, nor his meekness and moderation in seeking further knowledge: and it is no wonder he be provoked by it, to choose your delusions, because it is certainly those graces of meekness, charity, patience, gentleness, long-suffering, humbleness of mind, and such like, which go always in a chain together; these are an ornament of grace upon the head, and a crown of glory, and that chain about the neck Solomon mentions, Prov. iv. 9. Now when you cast off your crown of glory, your noblest ornament, your chain of dignity, should he give such precious pearls to swine? When you trample under foot the greater commandments of mercy, judgment, sobriety, humility, meekness, and charity, should he reveal lesser commandments, or discover his will in lesser matters? Consider the manner of expression here, "Let him shew forth out of a good conversation," &c. Truly it is good

works with meekness of wisdom; it is a good conversation, with a true profession, that shews forth a Christian, and shews him most before men. "Let your light," says Christ, "so shine before men." What is the shining beauty of Christian light? It is the works of piety, charity, equity, and sobriety,—these glorify the Father, and beautify all his children. You may easily conceive what that is, that chiefly commends religion to the ignorant world,—is it not the meekness of Christian wisdom? Is it not this harmless simplicity, that divine-like candour, that shines in every true Christian? Will rigidity, severity, passion, blood, violence, persecution, and such like, ever conciliate the hearts of men. Have such passions any beauty, any light in them, except a scorching consuming light? The light of a good Christian is like the light of the sun, of a sweet, gentle and refreshing nature, conveying influence to all, doing good to the household of faith. Peter will tell you what that is, that will most engage the hearts of the world, to a reverend esteem of true religion, 1 Pet ii. 12.—it is a "conversation, honest, and void of offence, giving to every one their own due, honouring all men, loving the brotherhood, not using our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness," and not overstretching it, to the loosing of other natural or civil bands. When men see Christianity making us do that really and cheerfully, which even nature itself teacheth all to do, that makes the light of it shining and beautiful. Are not these higher mysteries of faith, than some conceive? It is not other points of truth and profession, that are either above natural reason, or seem something opposite to it, that can engage natural beholders; and far less the prosecution of a temporal worldly interest of the people of God, to the destruction of all opposite to it, at least to the diminishing of all other men's gain and advantage, the engrossing of all earthly privileges into the hands of saints; that is such a thing that never entered into the heart of the shining lights of the primitive times. O how doth the stream of their exhortations run cross to this notion! I

am sure there is nothing in its own nature, such a stumbling-block to the world, or represents religion so odious and abominable to other men, as when it stands in the way, and intercepts all those natural immunities or privileges of life or estate. This makes natural men to hate it, even at a distance, and become irreconcilable enemies unto it; since it will not let them live by it, they are engaged not to let it live by them. I wish, indeed, all the places of power and trust in every nation were in the hands of godly men, not so much for the interest of the godly, as for the public interest; because "men fearing God, and hating covetousness," can only rule justly and comfortably; but to monopolize all power and trust to such a particular judgment and way as it is now given out, is truly, I think, inhuman and unchristian. Those deserve not power and trust who would seek it, and engross it wholly to themselves. But there is another thing which savours greatly of the flesh, at least of that spirit which Christ reproved in his disciples, to take away men's lives, liberty, and livelihood given by their Creator, upon every foot of opposition, and enmity to our way and interest. Is this to love our enemies, blessing them that curse us, or praying for them that despitefully use us, or persecute us? Let us remember we are Christians, and this is the rule of Christianity, that stops even the mouth of adversaries. But some still find an evasion for this, they will say they are God's enemies, and not my particular enemies only. But I pray you, were not the enemies of Christians in those days, more properly enemies to Christ than now? For they had nothing then to persecute them for, but the very profession of that name: and truly I confess in our days, we make more particular enemies, by particular injuries and disobligements, than either our profession or practice of religion make; but to put it out of all doubt, we learn they are persecutors, and do all manner of evil against us, for Christ's name sake. I have said this, because I know nothing that more darkeneth and obscures religion, than such worldly and temporal inter-

ests so eagerly pursued; and nothing makes it more to shine among men, than a good conversation with meekness of wisdom.

V.

James iii. 14.—But if ye have bitter envying, &c.

The cunning of Satan, and the deceitfulness of our own hearts, is such, that when a grosser temptation will not prevail with conscience in some measure enlightened, then they transform themselves into angels of light, and deal more subtilly with us; and there is no greater subtilty of Satan, nor any stronger self-deceit, than this—to palliate and cover vices with the shadow of virtue, and to present corruptions under the similitude of graces. It is common unto all temptations to sin, to have a hook under their bait, to be masked over with some pleasure or advantage, or credit; but when such earthly and carnal pretences do not insinuate themselves strongly into a believing heart that has discovered the vanity of all that which is in the world, so that it dare not venture upon sin for all the pleasures which attend it, then he winds about, and tames and changes his likeness unto light, conscience, and duty, and presents many works of darkness and corruption under the notion of duty and honesty, according as he finds the temper of a man's spirit to be. I can give no instance more pregnant, and even common, than this which is given here, viz. contentions and strivings among brethren. Bitter envying, maligning and censuring one another, are very manifest works of the flesh, and works of darkness, fitter for the night than the day, and for the time of ignorance, than the time after the clear light hath shined. Now, if Satan were about to persuade a church, or a Christian of this, how do you think he would go about it? Would he present some carnal advantage to be gained by it, some more profit or preferment from it? May be that might be very

taking with some more unconscientious self-seeking spirits, and I fear it would be too much taken with many; but sure it will not relish with every man: it will not entice him that hath the fear of God, and the love of Jesus stirring within him. Therefore, he must seek about, and find some false prophet, that may come out in the name of the Lord, and disguise himself, and by such means he will do it. Let a point of truth or conscience come in debate, let a notion of religion and one far off from an interest in Christ, be in the business, and then he can take advantage to make a man overreach himself in it. He will present the truth as a thing of so great weight and consequence, that he must contend for it, and empty all his wit and power and parts for it. This good intention being established, he raises up men's passions under a notion of zeal, and these being promoved under that pretence for such an end; whatsoever mean may be sought profitable for that end, all is chosen and followed without discretion or knowledge of what is good or evil: it is apprehended that the good principle of conscience, of duty, and the good intention may justify all. And by that means he hath persuaded the churches of Christ, and the Christian world, unto more rigidity, severity, cruelty, strife, contention, blood, violence, and such works of darkness, than readily have been found in the times of ignorance. Is Christendom a field of blood, rather than any other part of the world? Truly this is the reproach of Christianity; by this God's name is daily blasphemed. Here our Apostle sets himself to unmask this angel of light, and to decypher him in his own proper nature and notion. He takes off the vizard of religion and wisdom, and lets you see the very image of hell under it; "But if ye have bitter envying and strife, glory not;" ye glory as if ye had the truth; you glory in your zeal for it, you boast that ye are the wise men, the religious men; and so you take liberty, upon the account of envy, to malign, despise and contend with others: glory not, if you cherish such strifes and contentions, to the breach of Christian peace and

concord. You are liars against the truth which you profess,—do not think these proceed from true zeal; nay, nay, it is but bitter envy, and bitter zeal—do not flatter yourselves with an apprehension of wisdom, or knowledge, or religion, that is wisdom indeed; but mark of what nature it is—earthy, sensual, and devilish; and indeed that is a foolish wisdom, to say no worse of it.

You see then what need we have of the exhortation of the Apostle, Eph. vi. 11. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Truly we may stand against his darts, and violent open thrusts at our conscience, when we being ignorant of his devices, and not acquainted with his depth, 2 Cor. ii. 11. Rev. ii. 24, will not be able to stand against his ways; for we have a great and subtile party to wrestle with, "principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places," or heavenly things (as some render the word); he exercises much wickedness, spiritual, invisible wickedness in heavenly and religious things, in which it is hard to wrestle, unless we be endowed with faith, knowledge, and righteousness, and shod with the gospel of peace, the peaceable gospel reducing our spirits to a peaceable temper. I conceive there is nothing the world hath been more abused with, than the notion of zeal, justice, and such like; and there is nothing wherein a Christian is more ready to deceive himself than this. Therefore I conceive the Holy Ghost has undeceived us in this, and hath of purpose used the word zeal as often in a bad sense, as in a good one, and usually chooses to express envy and malice by it, though another word might suit as well, and be more proper; so here bitter zeal, ζηλος πικρος, is reckoned among the works of the flesh, Gal. v. 20. And we are exhorted to walk honestly as in the day, not in strife and envy, or zeal; and therefore the Apostle rebukes sharply the Corinthians, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men, whereas there is among you, envying," or zeal, "and strife," 1 Cor. iii. 3. Zeal is a vehemency of affection in any earnest pursuit, or oppo-

sition of a thing; and to make it good, it must not only be fixed upon a commendable and good object, but must run in the right channel, between the banks of moderation, charity, and sobriety. If it overflows these, certainly that excess proceeds not simply and purely from the love of God, or the truth, but from some latent corruption or lust in our members, which takes occasion to swell up with it. I find in Scripture the true zeal of God hath much self-denial in it; it is not exercised so much concerning a man's own matters, as concerning the matters that are purely and merely concerning God's glory; it is the most flexible, condescending, and forbearing thing in those things that relate to ourselves, and our own interests. Thus Moses is commended as the meekest man, when Aaron and Miriam raise sedition against him, Numb. xii. 3.; he had not affections to be commoved upon that account; but how much is he stirred and provoked upon the apprehension of the manifest dishonour of God, by the people's idolatry! How many are lions in their own cause, and in God's as simple and blunt as lambs! And how much will our spirits be commoved when our own interest lies in the business, and hath some conjunction with God's interest; that if these were parted our fervour abates, and our heat cools! I lay down this, then, as the fundamental principle of true zeal,—it is like charity, that seeketh not its own things.

But to make the nature of it clear, I give you three characters of it—Verity, charity, and impartiality. I say, it hath truth in it, a good thing for the object, and knowledge of that good thing in the subject, for the principle of it; "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing," Gal. iv. 18. Zeal in an evil thing hath something of the impatient and restless nature of the devil in it; there is nothing we would be more deliberate and circumspect in, than what to employ or bestow our affections upon. We should have a certain persuasion of the unquestionable goodness of that which we are ardent and vehement to obtain, else the more ardour and vehemency, the more

wickedness is in it. The Jews had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, and that is a blind self-will; for if a man take a race at his full speed in the dark, he cannot but catch a fall. The eager and hot pursuits of men are founded upon some gross misapprehensions.

Secondly, There must not only be a goodness supposed in the object, but some correspondence between the worth and weight of that goodness and the measure of our desires and affections; else there wants that conformity between the soul and truth, which makes a true zeal of God. I mean this—the soul's most vehement desires should be employed about the chiefest good, and our zeal move in relation to things unquestionably good, and not about things of small moment, or of little edification. This is the apostolic rule, that not only we consider that there be some truth in the thing, but that we especially take notice, if there be so much truth and goodness as requires such a measure of vehemency and affection. Therefore, in lesser things we should have lesser commotion, and in greater things greater, suitable to them; otherwise the Pharisees, who exercised their zeal about trifles, and neglected the weightier matters of the law, Matth. xxiii. 23, would not have been reproved by Christ. And indeed this is the zeal to which we are redeemed by Christ, Tit. ii. 1, " be ye zealous of good works," of works that are unquestionably good, such as piety, equity, and sobriety. There is nothing more incongruous than to strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel, to spend the vital spirits upon things of small concernment to our own or others edification, and to have nothing to spare for the weightier matters of true godliness. It is as if a man should strike a feather or the air with all his might,—he must needs wrest his arms; even so to strike with the spiritual sword of our affections, with such vehemency, at the lighter and emptier matters of religion, cannot choose but to disjoint the spirit, and put it out of course; as there is a falsehood in that zeal that is so vehement about a light matter, though it have some good

in it; for there is no suitable proportion between the worth of the thing and the vehemency of the spirit. Imagination acts in both; in the one it supposes a goodness, and it follows it; and in the other it imposes a necessity and a worth far beyond that which it really is, and so raises up the spirit to that height of necessity and worth that hath no being but in a man's imagination. I think there is no particular that the Apostle doth so much caveat; for I find in 1 Tim. i. 4., he takes off those endless matters that minister questioning rather than godly edifying, and gives us a better subject to employ our zeal upon, ver. 5., the great end and sum of all religion,—love to God and man, proceeding from "a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned," from which we must needs swerve, when we turn aside to such empty and vain janglings, ver. 6. For truly we have but narrow and limited spirits; and it must needs follow, when we give them very much to one thing, that they cannot attend another thing seriously, as Christ declares, Matt. vi. 24, "no man can serve two masters," &c. And therefore, there is much need of Christian wisdom to single out and choose the most proper and necessary object; for as much as we give other things that have not so much connexion with that, we take from it as much; and the apostle counsels us, 1 Tim. iv. 7, "rather to exercise ourselves unto true godliness," and to the most substantial things in it, rather than vain things, and opposition of science, chap. vi. 3, 4, 5, 20. There he opposes the wholesome words of Christ, and the doctrine that is according to godliness, unto questions and "strifes of words, whereof comes envy, railings, evil-surmisings, and perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds." And it is very observable that he is pressing the duties of believing servants towards their masters, whether believers or infidels, "that the name of God be not blasphemed, nor the gospel evil spoken of;" for there is nothing so much exposes it to misconstruction, as when it is stretched and abused unto the prejudice of natural and civil duties. And doubtless there

would be many doubts and questions about it in these days, some contending for worldly pre-eminence over the pagans, and some for the levelling of all Christians; but, says he, "If any man teach otherwise," or contend about this, "he is proud, knowing nothing," &c. He hath forsaken the substance of true godliness, which consists in good works shining before men, and abuses the notion of Christian liberty to the dishonour of Christ, and hath supposed gain, a worldly carnal interest of the godly, to be piety, and so pursues that fancy of his own. He renews this in the second epistle, chap. ii. 14, 15, 16, shewing that these strifes about words, albeit they seem to be upon grounds of conscience at the beginning, yet they increase unto more ungodliness, ver. 23. And unto Titus he gives the same charge very solemnly, Tit. iii. 8, 9, "I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who believe in God should be careful to maintain good works. But avoid foolish and unlearned questions," &c. "For this is a faithful saying." But again,

Thirdly, Zeal must have charity with it; and this all the Scriptures cited prove. It must be so tempered with love, that it vents not to the breach of Christian peace and concord; "Charity envieth not," or is not zealous; when zeal wants charity, it is not zeal, but envy. And hence it is that there are so frequent and fervent exhortations to avoid such questions as may gender strifes, and contentions, and malice. Now, certainly, there was some truth in them, and something of conscience also in them; yet he dissuades entirely the prosecution of them to the rigour, as men are apt to do, but wills us rather to have faith in ourselves. And truly, I think the questions that did then engender strifes, and rent the church, were as much if not more momentous, then the most part of those about which we bite and devour one another. The questions of the law, the circumcision, and eating of things sacrificed to idols, of things indifferent, lawful, or not lawful; yet all these he would have subordinated unto the higher end of the commandment, charity, 1 Tim. i. 4,

5. And when he exhorts the Corinthians to be zealous for spiritual gifts, yet he would have them excel in those things which edify the church, 1 Cor. xiv. 1—12, "Covet earnestly the best gifts;" and yet he shews them a more excellent way, and that is charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, to do all these things for the good and edification of the church, rather than of our own opinion, 1 Cor. xii. 3; xiv. 12. I find where the word zeal is taken in a bad sense, it hath these works of darkness attending it, wrath, strife, malice, &c., Gal. v. 20; 1 Cor. iii. 3; Rom. xiii. 23. It is accompanied with such a hellish crowd of noisome lusts. Let me add a differential character of it; it is uncharitable, contentious and malicious; it can do nothing, condescend to nothing, and is conversant about nothing, but what pleases our own humour, for the peace and unity of the church; it is a self-willed impetuous thing, like a torrent that carries all down before it. But truly right zeal runs calmly and constantly within the banks; it will rather consume its own bowels within with grief than devour others without.

VI.

Matt. xi. 28.—Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, &c.

It is the great misery of Christians in this life, that they have such poor, narrow, and limited spirits, that they are not fit to receive the truth of the gospel in its full comprehension; from whence manifold misapprehensions in judgment and stumbling in practice proceed. The beauty and life of things consists in their entire union with one another, and in the conjunction of all their parts; therefore it would not be a fit way to judge of a picture by a lineament, or of a harmony by a discrepant, nor of the world by some small parcel of it; but take all the parts together, all the notes and draughts, as conjoined by art in such an order, and there appears nothing but beauty and consent. Even so it falls out in our conceptions

of the gospel,—the straitness and narrowness of our spirits takes in truth by parcels, disjointed from the whole, looks upon one side of it, and sees not the other. As, for example, sometimes there appears unto us our duty and strait obligation to holy walking; and this being seen and considered alone, ordinarily fills the soul with some fears, jealousies, and confusions. Another time there rises out from under the cloud, the mercy and peace of Christ in inviting, accepting, and pardoning sinners by his blood, "that cleanses from all sin;" and in that view, such is our weakness and shortness of sight, there is nothing else presented but pardoning grace; and hence there is occasion given to the corruption of our hearts to insinuate secretly and subtilly unto us some inclinations to more liberty and indulgence to the flesh. Thus you see what stumbling in practice, and disorder in walking, this partial way of receiving the truth occasioneth. But it hath no less influence upon the many controversies and differences in doctrine and opinion about grace and works: for from whence arise these mistakes on both hands, but from the straitness of our apprehensions that we do not take the truth of God in its full latitude, but being eager upon one part, and zealous for it, we almost lose the remembrance, and sometimes fall in wrangling with the other. Many that proclaim the free grace of the gospel, their fault is not that they make it freer than it is—for truly it is as free as any Antinomian can apprehend it; but rather because they take it not in its entire and full complexion, which best declares the freedom of it, as comprehending both the pardon of sin, and purity from sin, grace towards us, and grace within us; and so, while they only plead for the one, they seem at least to oppugn the other. And, in like manner, others, apprehending the necessity, beauty, and comeliness of holiness and new obedience, are much in pressing and declaring this in opposition to the other way,—in which there may be some mistake, not in making it more meritorious than it is, but at leastwise in holding it out in such a manner as may somewhat obscure the freedom of God's

grace. The occasion of both these misapprehensions may be from the scattering of these diverse parcels of truth, as so many pearls, in the field of the Scripture: one is found here, and one takes it up, as if there were no more; here is repentance, and away he goes with that, without conjoining these scattered pieces into one body. But yet our Saviour sometimes gives us complete sums and models of the gospel, in which he presents all at one view at once, and especially in these words now read. The sum of all the gospel is contained in two words, "Come unto me, and take my yoke upon you:" all the duty of a Christian, and all his encouragement is here. His duty is to believe in Christ, and to give himself up to his obedience, and become his disciple, and to follow his example; and his encouragement is the rest promised, rest to his soul, which is the only proper seat of rest or disquiet. It is most capable and sensible of both; and this rest includes in its bosom, not only peace and tranquillity of mind here, which all the creatures combined cannot give, but all felicity besides; that eternal rest from all the labours of his life, and complacency in the fruition of God for ever. You see then what is the full invitation of the gospel, it is nothing else but—Come, and have rest; take on an easy yoke, and ye shall find rest. Come and be happy, —come and receive life; that which you seek elsewhere both ignorantly and vainly, here it is only to be found. Come, says Christ, and I promise to give it unto you; wait upon me by obedience, and you shall at length find by experience, that rest which I am willing to give you.

I desire you may consider both the order and the connexion of these integral parts of the gospel. The order of the gospel is a great part of the gospel; in some things method is arbitrary, and it matters not which go before, or which follow after, but here they become essential, and so a great part of the matter itself. There must be first coming to Christ, and then taking on his yoke; first believing, then obeying his commandments. This is as essential an order, as is between the fruit and the root, the

stream and the fountain, the sunbeam and the sun. Will any man expect fruit till he plant? There must then first be the implanting of the soul into Christ by faith, and then in due season follow the fruits of obedience by abiding in him. The perverting of this order makes much disorder in the spirits and lives of Christians. But how can it choose but all must wither and decay, if the soul be not planted by this river, "whose streams gladden the city of our God;" if the roots of it be not watered with the frequent apprehension and consideration of the grace of Christ, or the riches of God's mercy? The way and method of many Christians is just opposite to this, for you labour and weary yourselves, how to attain some measure and satisfaction in the latter before you adventure the first; to have the heart humbled by godly sorrow, and the soul inflamed by love to God, and the yoke of his obedience submitted unto; while in the meantime you deliberately suspend the exercise of faith, and apprehension of the pardoning grace of Christ. Now, how this can consist either with sound reason or religion I do not see; for were it not a point of madness to seek fruits from a tree that is lying above ground, and to refuse to plant it till it give some experience of its fruitfulness in the air? And what can be more absurd, than to imagine to have the Spirit of Christ working in the heart godly sorrow, or Christian love, and so renewing it again to his image, and yet withal Christ not received into the heart by faith? Do you not know that this is his first entrance into the soul? He enters there by the door of faith, and a soul enters into him at the door of faith, and the promise by faith. How, then, do ye imagine he shall work in you, before you will admit him to come in to you? Besides, either you apprehend that you may attain to such gracious qualifications by your own industry, without Christ, which is blasphemous to his name and office; for if you may, what need have you of him? Or if you believe that he is the only treasure of all grace and wisdom, and that all things are delivered to him of the Father; then how do you seek these things without him?

It must be wretched folly to seek them elsewhere, and not come to him. And, indeed, it is observable, that this exhortation to come unto Christ is subjoined unto verse 27, "All things are delivered unto me by the Father:" And, therefore, seeing all grace, and life, and happiness is inclosed in me; seeing without me there is nothing but a barren wilderness, in which you may toil and labour, and weary yourselves in fruitless pursuits, come hither, where it is originally and plentifully seated, and you cannot miss your end, nor lose your labour. And for the further illustration of this subject, I shall only add that,

Secondly, There is another woful mistake which possesses your minds who take up this way; for certainly you must think that there is some worth or dignity in it, whereby you intend to recommend yourselves unto Christ: for to what purpose is that anxious and scrupulous exaction of such previous qualifications? If it be not to give some more boldness and confidence to thy mind, to adventure to believe the promises, and come to Christ, because thou thinkest thou canst not come, when thou art so unclean and so unworthy; and therefore thou apprehendest that thou canst so purge thyself from sin, and adorn thyself with graces, as may procure some liking, and procure some favour at Christ's hand, which is indeed very opposite to the tenor of the proposal of free grace in the gospel, in which there is nothing upon the creature's part required as a condition or qualification to make them the more welcome in coming unto Christ.

Let this word then abide with you, "Come unto me, and take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;" which in substance is this, Come and cast your burdens on me first, and then take my burden upon you. O it is a blessed exchange! cast your heavy burden upon my back, and take my light burden on yours. For what is it to invite them that labour and are ladened to come, but to come and repose themselves for rest upon him; and that is directly to lay over that which burdens and ladeneth them upon him. There is an unsupportable burden of sin, the guilt of sin, and there is an intolerable weight of

wrath; "mine iniquities are gone over mine head," Psal. xxxviii. 4, "and as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me;" and when the wrath of God is joined to this burden, the name of the Lord burning with anger, how may you conceive a soul will be pressed under that burden, which is so heavy, that it will press the mountains into valleys, make the sea flee out of its place, and the earth tremble. Now here is the invitation, Is there any penitent soul that feels the burden of the weight of sin and wrath, let them come and disburden their souls of care, fear, and anxiety, in this blessed port of rest and refuge for poor sinners. Is there a yoke of transgressions wreathed about thy neck, and bound by the hand of God? Lam. i. 14; a yoke that neither men or angels are able to bear: then I beseech you come hither, and put over your yoke upon Jesus Christ; tie it about him, for God hath laid upon him "the iniquities of us all, and he bare our sins." He did bear the yoke of divine displeasure, and it was bound about his neck with God's own hand, with his own consent. Now here is the actual liberty and the releasement of a soul from under the yoke; here is its actual rest and quiet from under the pain of this burden: when a soul is made to consent unto, and willingly to put over that burden upon Christ. And this freedom and vacancy from the unsupportable yoke of guilt will certainly dispose the soul, and make it more capable of receiving the easy and portable yoke of his commandments: for you may easily perceive how easy love maketh all things, even difficulties themselves. Let once a soul be engaged that way to Christ, (and there is no possibility of engaging it in affection without some taste and feeling, or believing apprehension of his love and sufficiency for us), and you will see that the rough way will be made plain, and the crooked way straight; heavy things light, and hard things easy. For what command can be grievous to that soul, who apprehends that Christ hath taken the great weight of wrath off it, and carried away the intolerable pain of its guiltiness, which would have pressed and depressed it

eternally, without any hope of relaxation or ease? Hath he borne a yoke bound on by the majesty of God, and fastened with the cords of his displeasure? And can it be so heavy to a believing soul to take up that obedience which is fastened with the cords of love? And besides, how much will faith facilitate this, and will make this yoke to be cheerfully and willingly submitted to, since it delivers the soul from these unsufferable cares and fears, which did quite enervate its strength, and take away its courage! For I pray you, what is there in a soul under the fear of wrath, that is not totally disabled, by that heavy pressure, to any willing or cheerful obedience? The mystery of the spirit is spent that way; the courage of the soul is defeated, the heart is weakened, and nothing is suitable to the yoke of Christian love and obedience: but when once a soul apprehends Christ, this is a reposition of all his cares and burdens, and comes to exoner his soul in him, and cast his burthen upon him; then the soul is lightened as it were for this journey; then he may walk in the ways of obedience, without the pressing fear and pushing anguish of the dread of condemnation of the law. To conclude this head,—nothing will make you take up this yoke willingly, or bear it constantly, except you be delivered from the other yoke, that was so heavy even to Christ, and that made him cry, "My soul is exceeding heavy and troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour!"

Now those who are here in the text invited to come unto Christ, you see them described to be labouring and heavy-laden persons—"Come unto me all ye that labour," &c.; at least it seems to hold forth a previous qualification and condition of believing, without which we may not venture to come unto Christ. Indeed it is commonly so taken and mistaken; many conceive that the clause is restrictive and exclusive; that is to say, that this description of burdened and wearied sinners is a limitation of the command of believing, and that it circumscribes the warrant of coming to Christ, as if none might lawfully

come unto him but those that are thus burdened: and thus it is supposed to be a bar set upon the door of believing, at which sinners must enter in to Christ; to hold out, and shut out all those who are not thus qualified for access: which I truly conceive is contrary to the whole strain and current of the dispensation of the gospel. Therefore I take it to be rather declarative, or ampliative, or both. I say, it is partly for declaration not of the warrant to come, but of the persons who ordinarily do come to Christ. It declares not simply and universally who should come, but those who actually do come unto Christ. Take it thus then,—All persons who hear the gospel, are invited to come unto our Saviour without exception; the blind, the lame, those on the highways, not only the thirsty and the hungry, Isa. lv. 1, but those who have no thirst, or hunger for righteousness, but only for things that do not profit, ver. 2; not only the broken-hearted, that desire to come near to righteousness, but even the stout-hearted that are far from righteousness, such are commanded to hearken, and incline their ear, Isa. xlvi. 2; lv. 2, 3. Now this command that reaches all, gives an immediate actual warrant and right to all to come, if they will; for what is required previous to give warrant to obedience, but the command of obedience? And therefore the Jews were challenged because they would not come to Christ, that they might have life. Now, then, there is no bar of seclusion set upon the door of the gospel, to keep out any soul from entering in; there is no qualification or condition prescribed by the gospel, and without which if he come, he is actually welcomed and received by Christ, whatsoever you suppose he wants. It is true, men's own security and unbelief will exclude them from Christ, but that is no retraction on the gospel's part; it is a bar set on a man's own heart, that shuts him up from coming to the patent entry of the gospel.

Therefore, I take it thus, that though all ought to come to Christ, and none that are indeed willing are debarred for the want of any supposed condition, yet none will

actually and really come, till they be in some measure sensible of the weight of their sins, and the wrath of God; till they are labouring under the feeling of their own misery and desperate condition; and whatsoever be the measure of this, if it give so much uneasiness to a man that he can be content of rest and ease in Christ, he may and certainly ought to come unto Jesus, and cast all his burdens upon him. I think, then, that way that it is in so frequent use among Christians, to sit down, and essay to bring our hearts to some deep humiliation, and so to prescribe and order it, as we will deliberately delay, and suspend the thoughts of believing, till we have attained something of this: I say, this way crosses the very intention of Christ in uttering these words, and such like. For certainly he meant to take away impediments, and not to cast delays in our way; and therefore I said the word was rather for ampliation, that is, rather to encourage those who accounted themselves excluded, than to exclude any who desire to come: Come unto me, every one, but especially you that labour,—ye should make the greatest haste. Come unto me, even though ye apprehend the wrath of God to be intolerable, and have foolishly wearied yourselves in seeking rest by other ways. Ye that are most apprehensive of your sins, and so are so apt to doubt of any acceptation; you that think yourselves worse than any, and so to have least warrant to come to me; yet come, and I will by no means cast you out, but give rest to your souls. So that it is not intended to exclude those who are most ready to think themselves excluded, because they see so much sin in themselves.

Therefore, my beloved, without farther disputing about it, let me exhort you in the name of Jesus Christ, who here invites and commands you, that you would at once put a period to this, and bring it to some conclusion; since you are diseased and disquieted in yourselves, and cannot find rest in your own bosoms, I beseech you come here, where it is most likely to be found, and it is most certain,—if you come you shall find it. Do not continue

wrangling and contesting about the matter; for what is that but to encrease your labour and vexation, and add to your heavy burden? It will be so far from giving you any ease in the result of it, that it will rather make your wounds more incurable, and your burdens more intolerable; which is both opposite to the intention of the gospel, and the nature of believing. Here, then, is your rest, here is your refreshing rest; here it is in quiet yielding to his gracious offers, and silent submitting to the gospel; not in bawling or contending with it, which is truly a contending against ourselves. Isa. xxviii. 12, "This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest;" it is nowhere else; not in heaven or earth: for there is no back that will take on this burden, or carry it away from us. There is no disburdening of a sinner of guilt and wrath in any other port or haven but in Christ, who is the city of refuge; wheresoever you think to exoner yourselves besides this, you will find no refreshing, but a multiplication of burdens and cares; your burden shall be rolled over upon you again with double weight. Therefore, my beloved, if you will not hear this, consider what follows, viz. you shall refuse this rest and refreshing, and restlessly seek another rest: you may go and be doing; but "you shall fall backward, and be broken and snared." Your burden shall fall back upon you, and you shall fall and be broken under it. That which the Lord said to Israel when they would flee to Egypt, is most true in this case: "In returning, and in rest ye shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength;" but, alas! they would not! That is a sad close.

VII.

Matt. xi. 29.—Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, &c.

Self-love is generally esteemed infamous and contemptible among men; it is of a bad report everywhere;

and, indeed, as it is taken commonly, there is good reason for it, that it should be hissed out of all societies, if reproaching and speaking evil of it would do it. But to speak the truth,—the name is not so fit to express the thing; for that which men call self-love, may rather be called self-hatred: nothing is more pernicious to a man's self, or pestilent to the societies of men than this; for if it may be called love, certainly it is not self-love, but the love of some baser and lower thing than self, to our eternal prejudice; for what is ourselves, but our souls; Matt. xvi. 26. Luke ix. 25. For our Lord there shews, —that to lose our souls and to lose ourselves is one and the same thing. But what is it to love our souls? certainly it is not to be enamoured with their deformed shape, as if it were perfect beauty. Neither can it be interpreted any true love to our souls, to seek satisfaction and rest unto them where it is not at all to be found; for this is to put them in perpetual pain and disquiet. But here it is, that true self-love, and soul-love centereth in that which our Saviour propounds, namely,—to desire and seek the everlasting welfare of our souls, and that perpetual rest unto them; after which, there is no labour nor motion any more. Therefore, to draw unto himself the souls of men the more sweetly, and the more strongly too, he fasteneth about them a cord of their own interest,—and that the greatest real rest; and by this he is likely to prevail with men in a way suited to their reasonable natures. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are wearied, and I will give you rest." Self-interest is ordinarily exploded, at least disowned and disclaimed in men's discourses, as a base, wretched, sordid thing; which, though all men act by it, yet they are all ashamed to profess it. But yet, if the interest be so high as indeed to concern self, and that which is truly ourself; then both nations and persons count it the most justifiable ground of many of their actions,—self preservation. But yet there is a higher interest than that, that relates to the eternal interest of our souls; and truly to own and profess, and prosecute that interest of soul-

preservation, of eternal rest to our souls, is neither ignoble nor unbeseeming a Christian; neither is it any way inconsistent with the pursuance of that more public and catholic interest of God's glory, in respect of which, all interests, even the most general and public, are particular and private. For this is the goodness of our God,—that he hath bound up his own honour, and our happiness in one bundle together; that he hath knit the rest of our precious souls, and the glory of his own name inseparably together: not only to condescend to our weakness, but to deal with us suitably to our natures. He proposes our own interest chiefly, to draw us to himself; and allows this happy self-seeking in which a man loses himself, that he may be found again in Christ. Seeing, then, it is thus, that elsewhere, wheresoever you turn yourselves, within or without, there is no rest, but endless labour, and fruitless toil; you find this already by experience. You who apprehend the weight of your sins, and the greatness of divine wrath, that there is an intolerable pressure upon your souls already; and that this is nothing diminished, but rather augmented by your vain labours and inquiries after some ease and peace; your endeavours to satisfy your own consciences, and pacify God's wrath some other way, have filled you with more restless anxiety: and seeing there is a certain assurance of true rest and tranquillity here, upon the easiest terms imaginable; that is, come to Jesus Christ, all ye who are disquieted and restless, and he will give you rest. O should not this be an invincible and irresistible attractive to your hearts,—to draw them to our Redeemer over all impediments? The rest is perfect happiness, and yet the terms are easy; only come and embrace it, and seek it nowhere else. There is a kind of quietness and tranquillity in the seeking and attaining this rest: all other rests are come to by much labour and business. Here Christ would have you who have laboured in vain for rest, and lost your toil and your pains to come at it, by ceasing from labour, as it were, which you could not at-

tain by labour,—to come by it: *Cunctando* (by keeping) which you could not gain *pugnando* (by fighting.) There is a quiet and silent way of believing promises, and rolling yourselves upon Christ offered in them; which is the nearest and most compendious way to this blessed rest and quietness; which, if you think to attain by much clamour and contention of debate or dispute, or by the painful labour and vexation of your spirits, which you call exercise of mind, you take the way about, and put yourselves further off from it. Faith has a kind of present vacancy and quietness in it—in the very acting of it. It is not a tumultuous thing; but composes the soul to quietness and silence,—to a cessation from all other things; but the looking upon Christ holden out in the gospel, and this in due time, will give greater rest and tranquillity. Consider what the Lord speaks to the people that would take a journey upon them to Egypt, Isa. xxx. 15, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Their peace was near at hand, but they would travel abroad to seek it,—and they find trouble; their strength was to sit still, and be quiet, and trust in the Lord: nay, but they would not sit still, but flee and wander abroad to their old house of bondage; and therefore, says the Lord, you shall flee. Now, may not this represent the folly and madness of souls that are under the fear of wrath, and sense of sin, as it were a type of it? Our rest is in resting on a Saviour; our peace is in quiet confidence in him; it is not far off,—it is in our mouth: "The word is near," says Paul, "it is neither in heaven above, nor in the depth below." We need not go abroad and search for that happiness we want,—it is nigh at hand in the gospel; but while we refuse this, and give ourselves to restless agitation and perplexity about it, sometimes we apprehend that we are eased in our travels and endeavours; but it shall prove to us no better than Egypt,—a house of bondage: wheresoever we seek shelter out of Christ, we will find it a broken reed, that not only will

fail under us, but in the rent will split our hand, and pierce us through with many sorrows. To conclude, then, this head,—coming to Christ with our burdens, is a motion towards rest; for he adds, "I will give you rest:" but, moreover, there is a kind of rest in this motion; it is an easier, plainer, and pleasanter motion than those troubled and laborious windings and wanderings of our hearts after vanity. He persuades you to walk in this path of righteousness and peace, and you shall find a great rest at the end of it; "Receiving," says Peter, "the end of your faith,—the eternal salvation of your souls."

Now, the next thing in the text is,—having come to Jesus, and found rest and happiness in him, we must "take his yoke upon us;" and this is the other integral part of the gospel, of which I desire you to consider these few particulars that occur in the words: The order in which it is to be taken; the nature of this yoke; and the most ready and expeditious way of bearing it.

The method and order in which Christ's yoke is to be taken upon us is: *first*, To come unto our Saviour, and give over the yoke of our transgressions to him, and then to take up the yoke of his commandments from him; to believe in his promises, and rest our souls on them; and to take up the yoke of his precepts, and proceed to motion and walking in that rest. Now, this method hath a double advantage in it, for the real receiving and carrying of Christ's yoke; it gives vacancy and room for it, and it gives strength and furniture for it: it expels that which would totally disable you to bear it, and brings in that comfortable supply which will strengthen and enable you to bear it. Consider what posture a soul is put into, that lives under the terror of God, and is filled with the apprehension of the guilt of sin, and the greatness of God's wrath. I say, such a soul, till he have some rest from that grievous labour, is fit for no other more pleasant labour, until he be something disburthened of that which is like to press him down to hell. He is not very capable

of any new burden, until the yoke of his transgressions that is wreathed about his neck be taken off. Do ye think he can find any vacant room for the yoke of Christ's obedience? When a soul is under the dominion of fear and terror, under the power of grief and anguish, do ye think he is fit for any thing, or can do any thing but groan in that prison of darkness under these chains? Such a soul is in bondage, under servitude, and can neither take up this yoke of liberty, nor walk in it. The strength and moisture of the spirit is drunk up by the poison of these arrows; and there remains neither attention, affection, nor spirit for any thing else. Therefore, here is the incomparable advantage that redounds from this way of coming first to Christ, and exonering our cares and fears in his bosom, and in disburthening our sins upon him who hath taken them on, and carried them away, as that scape-goat sent into the wilderness on which they laid the sins of the people: by this means, I say, you shall have a vacancy for the yoke of Christ, and liberty to all your faculties, your understanding, will, and affections, (which are no better than slaves and captives *non sui juris*, while they are under these tyrannous passions of fear and horror), to attend the obedience of Christ, and the drawing of his yoke: this will relieve your souls out of prison, and then you will be fit for employment. Besides this, there is furniture and help brought into the soul, which enables it to this; and without which, though it were not pressed under a burden of sin and wrath, yet it would neither be able nor willing. There is that supply and strength that faith brings from Christ, which arises from our mystical implantation in him; from hence flows that communication of his grace to a believer: "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 16, 17. Now this efficacy and virtue that is in Christ the head, is transmitted unto the members of his body by believing in him. Indeed, the very apprehension of such a Saviour may have some quickening virtue in it; but certainly the great in-

fluence of life is annexed to it by his gracious promise, "because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. "As the living Father who sent me lives in himself, and I have life by the Father; so he that believes on me shall live by me," John vi. 57. "Abide in me, and I in you, and ye shall bring forth much fruit." He hath graciously appointed the derivation of that life to us, to be conjoined with our right apprehensions, and believing meditations of him; making, as it were, faith the opening of his house, to let in his fulness to us. Now, besides this more mysterious and supernatural furniture and supply, there is even something that is naturally consequent to it; some enabling of the soul for holy obedience, flows naturally from the love of Christ: and whenever a believer apprehends what he has done for him, finds some rest and relaxation in him; it cannot but beget some inward warmth of love to him, who so loved us. "Faith worketh by love," says Paul: the way it goes to action is by affection; it once inflames that, and then there is nothing more active and irresistible. It hath a kind of indefatigable firmness in it; it hath an unwearied strength to move in the yoke all the day long. In a word, nothing is almost impossible, or too hard for it; for it is of the nature of fire to break through all, and over all impediments; nothing is so easy, but it becomes uneasy to a soul under fear; and nothing so difficult, but becomes easy to a soul wherein perfect love has cast out fear: for love makes a soul to move supernaturally in divine things, as a natural or co-natural agent, freely, willingly, and constantly. If they be not suitable to our natures as corrupted, and so grievous to love, then as much as it possesses the heart, it makes the heart co-natural to them, and supplies the place of that natural instinct that carries other creatures to their own works and ends, strongly and sweetly, 1 John v. 3. Psal. cxix, 165. Neh. viii. 10. Col. iii. 16. Now you may judge, whether or not you can possibly expect so much advantage in any other method

or way you take. This I leave to your own consideration and experience.

And so I come to the next thing proposed, 2*dly*, To consider what this yoke is; and what is the nature of it. And may I not, upon this head, justly enough distinguish a twofold yoke of doctrine and discipline,—that is, the yoke of Christ's commandments and laws, which both, in his love and wisdom, he hath imposed upon us for the regulation of our lives; and this we are to take on, by an obedience cheerful and constant. But there is another yoke mentioned in scripture, namely, the yoke of his chastisements and correcting; such a one as Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18, was tried with, and was long ere he could learn to bear it: "It is good for a man to bear this yoke in his youth," Lam. iii. 27; now, whether or not this be meant here, I do not contend. The first is the chief intent; and it is not needful to exclude this altogether, since it is not the smallest point of Christianity to take up the one yoke by submission, as well as take up the other by obedience. However it be, obedience must be taken so largely, that it cannot but comprehend the sweet compliance and submission of the will to God's will in all cross dispensations, which is no little probation of the loyal and obedient temper of the heart. Both yokes must be taken up; for so Christ speaks of his cross: "If any man will be my disciple, he must take up his cross and follow me," Matt. xvi. 24, 25. It must be lifted up upon our shoulders, as it were, willingly and cheerfully; we actually concurring, as it were, to the bearing of it, and the receiving it; but there is this difference between the one yoke and the other,—the one cannot be imposed upon us, neither can we bear it, except we actively, and with our own consent and delight, take it up. Though God may impose laws upon us, and give us righteous and faithful commandments, which, indeed, lay a strait obligation and tie upon us, under pain of disloyalty and rebellion, to walk in them; yet it never becomes our

yoke, and is never carried by us, until there be a subsequent consent of the soul, and a full condescension of the heart, to embrace that yoke with delight. Till we yoke ourselves unto this commandment, by loving and willing obedience, we have not his yoke upon us; "Thy people shall be made willing in the day of thy power." It is not terrors and constraints, but the bands of love will bind us to this yoke: it must be bound upon us by the cords of love, not of fear. He is a true king, not a tyrant; he loves, *imperare volentibus*, to rule every man with his own consent; but a tyrant rules every man against his will, *nolentibus imperat*. But the other yoke of his discipline, —his cross, whether it be for his sake, or whether it be the general cross of our pilgrimage here, and the vicissitudes and changes of this life: it is not in our arbitrement to bear a cross, or have a cross or not; have it we must, bear it we must, whether we chuse or refuse it. There is no man can be exempted from some yoke of this kind; no man can promise himself immunity from some cross or other; if not in poverty, yet in abundance; if not in contempt and reproach, yet in honour and greatness. There is nothing of that kind that will not become weighty with itself alone, though nothing be superadded to it. So then, since every man must have a yoke, he hath only the advantage who takes it up, and bears it patiently; for if he thus sweetly comply and yield to God's will, he will not so much bear his cross, as his cross will bear him. If thou take it up, it will take thee up, and carry thee; if thou submit, and stoop willingly to God's good pleasure, thou wilt make it a more easy yoke, and light burden; *ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*. If thou be patient, his dispensation will gently and sweetly lead thee to rest; but an impatient soul is dragged and drawn after it against the hair, and yet he must follow it. There is this mighty disadvantage in our impatient unsubjection to God's will, that it makes that a yoke which is no yoke; no cross, a cross; an easy yoke, hard, and a light burden heavy; and yet, notwithstanding, we must bear it.

A yoke, a cross, we cannot escape, whithersoever we go, whithersoever we turn ourselves, because we carry ourselves about with us; and our own crooked perverse apprehensions of things, which trouble us more than the things themselves. Now, consider the reasonableness of taking on the yoke of Christ's obedience. Should we not, with David, offer ourselves willingly, and present ourselves even before we are called? "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God: I delight in thy law; it is in my inward part," Psal. xl. 8. There is no yoke so reasonable, if you consider it as imposed by Christ our King and Lawgiver. Hath he not redeemed us from the house of bondage, from the vilest and basest slavery, under the most cruel tyrants,—Satan, and death, and hell? Heb. ii. 15. Hath he not asserted and restored us into the true liberty of men, and of the sons of God? "The Son hath made us free," John viii. 32, when we were under the most grievous yoke of sin, and wrath, and the eternal curse of God. He hath put his own neck under it, and become a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law; and so he hath carried away those iron chariots, those yokes of brass and iron, whereby Satan kept us in subjection; and now, being established our careful King, not only by the title of the justest and most beneficial conquest that ever was made, but by God's solemn appointment upon the hill of Zion, Psal. ii. 6; and being exalted a Prince to give us salvation, were it not most strange, if his kingdom should want laws, which are the life and soul of republics and monarchies? Ought not we to submit to them gladly, and obey them cheerfully? Should not we absolutely resign ourselves to his will, and esteem his commandments concerning all things to be right? What command should be grievous to that soul, who is delivered from the curse of all the commandments, and is assured never to enter into condemnation? If there were no more to say, were it not monstrous ingratitude to withdraw ourselves from subjection to him, or yield obedience to any other strange lords, as our lusts

are? Would it not be an unexemplified unthankfulness to requite rebellion to him, for so much unparalleled affection? "Since we are not our own, but bought with a price," we are not, *sui juris*, to dispose of ourselves; all reason should say,—that he who paid so dear for us, should have the use of us; and that is nothing but glory he seeks from us,—that we offer and consecrate soul and body to him, to come under his yoke. As for the gain, it redounds all to ourselves, and that as the greater gain too.

Now a word to the last thing proposed, for I can only hint at it,—the most excellent and ready way of bearing this yoke, is to learn of him, to present him as our pattern, and to yield ourselves to him as his disciples and scholars; not only to learn his doctrine, but to imitate his example and practice; to walk even as he walked. And herein is great moment of persuasion,—Christ puts nothing upon you, but what he did take upon himself. There is so much more reason for you to take it up, that it is his own personal yoke which he himself carried: "for he delighted to do the Father's will;" it was his meat and drink to work in that yoke. Now, there are two things especially, wherein he propones himself the exemplar or pattern of our imitation, viz. his humility and meekness of spirit: "He was meek and lowly in heart." And these graces have the greatest suitableness to capacitate and dispose every man for taking and keeping the yoke of Christ. Humility and lowliness bows his back to take on the least of his commands; this makes him stoop low, and makes his shoulders fit for it; and then, meekness arms him against all difficulties and impediments that may occur in it.

VIII.

Matt. xi. 29.—Take my yoke upon you, &c.

Christianity consists in a blessed exchange of yokes between Christ and a pious soul. He takes our uneasy yoke, and gives his easy yoke: the soul puts upon him that unsupportable yoke of transgressions, and takes from him the portable yoke of his commandments. Our burden was heavy, too heavy for angels, and much more for men; it would crush under it all the strength of the creatures; "for who could endure the wrath of the Almighty? Or what could a man give in exchange for his soul?" Nay, that debt would drown the whole creation, if they were surety for it. Notwithstanding Christ hath taken that burden upon him, being able to bear it, having almighty shoulders, and everlasting arms for it: and yet you find how heavy it was for him, when it pressed out that groan from him, "Now is my soul sore amazed, very heavy, and exceeding sorrowful even unto death! and what shall I say?" That which carried it away from us, hath buried it in his grave, whether it pressed him down. It gets him very low under it, but he hath got above it, and is risen again; and whereas in vain there was a stone put above him, and sealed, he hath rolled a stone above that yoke and burden, that it cannot be able to weigh down any believing soul to hell: for that weight which depressed his spotless soul would have depressed the sons of men to eternal darkness. Now for his burden. We observe that it is of another nature, to speak properly, than other burdens. It is not a heavy yoke or burden; but a state of liberty, an ornament, a privilege: it is a chain of gold about a saint's neck, to bind Christ's laws about them; every link of that chain is more precious than rubies or diamonds. If there be any burden in it, it is the burden of honour, the burden of privilege, and incompar-

able dignity: *bonus,* not *onus,* or *onus honoris.* This is that which he puts upon us, or rather that which a believer receives from him. Now I will not have you so to take it, as if Christ did not propose the terms thus, "If you will be willing to take on the yoke of my laws, I will take on the yoke of your sins and curses." Nay, it is not such an exchange as is thus mutually dependent; for it hath pleased the Father, without consulting us, and the Son, without our knowledge or consent, to conclude what to do with the heavy and unsupportable burden of sinners. "The Father laid upon him the iniquities of us all," and he of his own accord "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," Isa. liii. 4, 5, 6; and that burden did bruise him; yea, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him," and it pleased himself to be bruised. O strange and unparalleled love, that could digest so hard things, and make so grievous things pleasant! Now I say, he having thus taken on our burden already, calls upon us afterward, and sends forth proclamations, and affectionate invitations, "Come unto me, all ye poor sinners, that are burdened with sin, and wearied with that burden; you who have tired yourselves in these by-ways, and laboured elsewhere in vain, to seek rest and peace: you have toiled all night and caught nothing; come hither, cast your net upon this side of the ship, and you shall find what you seek. I have undertaken your yoke and burden; why then do ye laden yourselves any more with the apprehension of it? The real and true burden of wrath I have already carried away; why then do ye weary yourselves with the imagination of it? Only come to me, and see what I have done, and you shall find rest and peace."

Now this being proponed absolutely unto sinners, and they being invited to consent to that which Christ hath done in their name, in the next place he comes to impose his easy yoke upon us, not at all for any recompence of what he hath done, but rather for some testimony of gratitude and thankfulness on our part, and for the manifestation of grace and love on his part. I do indeed con-

ceive, that the imposition of the yoke of Christ's laws upon believers, is as much for the declaration of his own love and goodness, as the testification of our thankfulness. If you consider the liberty, the beauty, and the equity of this yoke, it will rather be construed to proceed from the greatest love and favour, than to tend any way to recompense his love. "Herein is perfect liberty," Psal. cxix. 32, 45. It is an enlargement of heart, from the base restraint and abominable servitude of the vilest lusts, that tyrannize over us, and keep our affections in bondage. O how narrow bounds is the liberty of the spirits of men confined unto, that they serve their own lusts! Sin itself, and the lusts of the flesh, are a grievous yoke, which the putting on of this yoke looses thee from; and when the heart is thus enlarged with love and delight in Christ, then the feet, unfettered, may walk at liberty, and run in the way of God's commandments: "I will walk at liberty, when I have a respect to thy ways," Psal. cxix. 45. O how spacious and broad is that way in reality, which, to our first apprehension, and the common construction, is strait and narrow! The truth is, there is no straitness, no bondage, no scantiness, but in sin; that is the most abominable vassalage, and the greatest thraldom of the immortal spirit—to be so basely dragged by the flesh downward to the vilest drudgery, and to be so pinched and hampered within the narrowness of created and perishing things. To speak properly, there is no slavery but this of the spirit; for it is not so contrary to the nature and state of the body, (which by its first institution was made a servant) to be under the dominion of men, and further we cannot reach: yea, it is possible for a man, while his body is imprisoned, to be yet at greater freedom than those who imprison him—as his mind is, so he is. But to be a servant of sin and unrighteousnes, must totally degrade the soul of man; it quite defaces that primitive glory, and destroys that native liberty, in which he was created. Therefore, to have this sin taken off us, and the yoke of Christ's obedience put on us, "to be

made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness," that is the soul's true liberty; which sets it forth at large to expatiate in the exceeding broad commandments and in the infinite goodness of God, where there is infinite room for the soul.

When, then, I consider how beautiful this is for a reasonable spirit, to be under the law of him that hath made it, and redeemed it, I cannot but think that Christ doth rather beautify and bless, than burden. The beauty of the world consists in that sweet order, and harmonious subordination of all things, to that law God hath imposed upon them, or engraven upon their natures; if we should suppose but one of the parts of the world to swerve from the primitive institution, what a miserable distraction would ensue! How deformed would this beautiful and adorned fabric become! How much more is it the beauty, grace, and comeliness of an intelligent being, to be under the law of him that gave him a being, and to have that written in his heart! To be in a manner transformed by the shining glory of these laws,—to be a living law. What is it, I pray you, deforms these fallen angels, and makes them devils? Why do we paint a good angel in a beautiful and comely image, and the devils are commonly represented in the most horrid, ugly, and monstrous shape and visage? Is it not this that makes the difference,—that the one is fallen from a blessed subordination to the will of God, and the other keeps that station? But both are equal in nature, and were alike in the beginning.

Add unto this, the equity of Christ's yoke; there is nothing either so reasonable in itself, or yet so suitable to ourselves; for what is it that he puts upon us? Truly no new commandment; it is but the old command renewed: it is no new law. Though he hath conquered us, and hath the right of absolute dominion over us, yet he hath not changed our fundamental laws; he changes only the present tyrannical yoke of sin; but he restores us, as it were, to our fundamental liberty we formerly enjoyed,

and that sin forced us from, when it conquered us. Christ's yoke is not a new imposition, it is but the ancient yoke, that was bound upon man's nature by God the Creator. The Redeemer doth not invent or contrive one of his own; he only looses off the yoke of iniquity, and binds on that sweet yoke of obedience and love to God. He publishes the same laws, many of which are already written in some obscure characters upon our own minds; and he again writes them down all over in our hearts. There is nothing superadded by Jesus Christ, but a chain of love, to bind this yoke about our necks, and a chain of grace and truth to keep his laws; and truly these make the yoke easy, and take away the nature of a burden from it. O what mighty and strong persuasions! O what constraining motives of love and grace doth the gospel furnish; and the rarest cords to bind on Christ's yoke upon a reasonable soul; cords of the most unparalleled love!

I shall only add unto all this, that as herein Christ hath expressed or completed the expression of his love upon his part; so upon our part it becomes us to take on his yoke, in testimony of our thankfulness. We owe our very selves unto him; what can be more said? We owe ourselves once and again; for we are twice his workmanship, —first created by him, and then renewed or created again unto good works. "We are bought with a price, we are not our own:" can there be any obligation imagined beyond this? Let us therefore consecrate ourselves to his glory; let all who believe the gospel, dedicate themselves to its obedience, not so much for salvation to themselves, as their obligation to their Saviour. We are not called so much to holiness and virtue, that we may be saved, as because we are saved, to be blameless before God in love. O how gracious and honourable a disposition of this kind would be, to serve him more out of gratitude for what he hath done, than merely for the reward that he will give!

IX.

Rom. xv. 13.—Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, &c.

It is usual for the Lord, in his word, to turn his precepts into promises; which shews us, that the commandments of God do not so much import an ability in us, or suppose strength to fulfil them, as declare that obligation which lies upon us, and his purpose and intention to accomplish in some what he requires of all; and therefore, we should accordingly convert all his precepts into prayers, seeing he hath made them promises. This gives us ground, as it were, to retort his commands by way of requests and supplications. The Scripture here gives us a precedent, and often elsewhere hath made his command a promise. It is then in the next disposition, and nearest capacity to be turned into the form of a supplication: the joy promised in the preceding verse is elsewhere commanded; and this immediately disposes the sinner to receive a new form of prayer from a believing heart, and that not only for himself, but for others. You see how frequently such holy and hearty wishes are interjected in his writings; and indeed, such ejaculations of the soul's desires, whether kept within, or vented, will often interrupt the thoughts and discourses of believers; but yet they break no sentence, they mar no sense, no more than the interposition of a parenthesis. Such desires will follow by a kind of natural resultance upon the lively apprehension of any divine excellent thing, and secret complacency in it; and a stirring of the heart to be possessed with it, will almost prevent deliberation. Such an attractive power the excellency of any object hath in the heart, that it draws it and engages it almost before any consultation be called about it. Now there is something of this in those objects which we are naturally delighted with; all at least that they want, the apprehension supplies, and this draws the

heart forcibly after them, as it were, without previous advisement; yet because of the limitation, emptiness, and scarcity of these things, commonly the desires of men are contracted much within themselves, and run towards a monopoly of these things. They are so poor and narrow, that they cannot be enjoyed of more without division, and the dividing them cannot be without diminution of each man's contentment; and therefore, men's wishes ordinarily are stinted within their own satisfaction and possession, and cannot without some restraint of reason extend further to other men. But this is the vast difference between spiritual things and bodily, eternal things and temporal, that there is no man possessed of spiritual good, but he desires a community. It is as natural, upon the apprehension of them, to enlarge the soul's wishes to other men; because there is such excellency, abundance, and solidity discovered in them, as that all may be full, and none envy or prejudge another. They are like the light that can communicate itself to all, and that without diminution of its splendour; all may see it without prejudice one to another: they are such an ocean that every one may fill their vessel, and yet nothing less for them that come after. And therefore the soul that wishes largely for itself, will not find that inward discontent at the great abundance of another, which is the inseparable shadow of earthly and temporal advantages. It is cross to men's interest that love gain or preferment, or any such thing, that others grow rich, or are advanced high in the world, for it intercepts what they desire; but it is not at all the interest of a godly soul, that others be worse than himself, but rather the salvation and happiness of all men is that interest which alone he espouses.

Now for this, my beloved, before we proceed further, you may find how the pulse of your souls beats, and what your temper is,—by considering what is the ordinary unrestrained and habitual wishes of your hearts. Certainly, as men are inclined, so they affect, and so they desire; and these unpremeditated desires that are commonly

stirred up in the hearts of men, argue much the inward temper and inclination of the heart, and give the best account of it. I think, if men could reflect upon themselves, they will find that earthly things are vain, while they put on another beauty, and have a more magnificent representation in their minds; and so draw after them the choicest of their affections, that they cannot spare much real affection for spiritual things, which are apprehended more slightly and darkly, and make the lighter and more superficial impression. But certainly, this will be the most natural beating of a holy heart, and the ordinary breathing of it,—to desire much of this spiritual treasure for themselves and others. You know what the thoughts and discourses of merchants turn most upon,—it is to have good winds, fair weather, good markets, and all things that may facilitate gain: and husbandmen wish for good seasons, timely showers, and dry harvests, that there may be plenty. And generally what men's hearts are set upon, that they go abroad fervently and incessantly in longing desires after. Now, truly, this is the Christian's inward motion; and this is his salutation wherewith he congratulateth others: "The God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing." His gain lies in another airth [*i. e.* direction]; his plenty is expected from another field, and that is from above, from the God of hope, the sweetest name (if all the rest be answerable) to be dealt with all, either for gain or plenty; for it is hope that makes labour sweet; and if it answer expectation, then all is well: therefore, in the sowing the seed of prayers, and supplications with tears for this harvest of joy, and in trafficking for this treasure of peace, it is good that we have to do with the God of hope, who cannot make us ashamed; "for he that soweth must sow in hope," 1 Cor. ix. 10. And therefore, though we sow in tears, yet let us mingle hope therewith, and the harvest shall be joy, and the plenty affluence of peace in the Holy Ghost. Now, if we believed this, would not our sorrows be deep, and our labours sweet?

In the words you have read, there is the highest wish of a holy heart for himself, and them he loves best; that one desire, which, if he had no occasion ever to present to God but once, this he would certainly fall upon, or some such like,—to be filled, after this manner, "with all peace and joy in believing." These are the fruits of the Spirit he desires to be filled with, and feed upon,—peace as an ordinary meal, and joy as an extraordinary dessert, or as a powerful cordial; and to supply what here is wanting at present,—the hope of what is to come, and that in abundance. This is even an entertainment that a believer would desire for himself, and those who have his best wishes while he is in this world; he would despise the delicacies of kings, and refuse their dainties, if he might sit at this table that is spread on the mountain of God's church,—a full feast, which fills the soul with peace, joy, and hope, as much as now it is capable of. Now, these precious fruits, you see, in the words, shew the root that brings them forth, and the branch that immediately bears them. The root is the God of hope, and the power of the Holy Ghost; and a soul being ingrafted as a living branch by faith into Christ, receives virtue to bring forth such pleasant fruits; so that they grow immediately upon the branch of believing, but the sap and virtue of both come from the Holy Ghost, and the God of hope. Or to take it up in another like notion,—this is the river which gladdeneth the city of God with his streams, that waters the garden of the Lord with its threefold stream: for you see it is parted in three heads; and every one of them is derived from another. The first in the order of nature is peace—a sweet, calm, and refreshing river, which sometimes overflows like the river Nile; and then it runs in a stream of joy, which is the high spring-tide; but ordinarily, it sends forth the comfortable stream of hope, and that in abundance. Now, this threefold river hath its original high, as High as the God of hope and the power of the Holy Ghost; but the channel of it is situated low, and it is believing in Christ.*

To begin, then, with the first of these. Truly there is nothing can be spoken that sounds more sweetly in the ears of men, than peace and joy; they need nothing to commend them, for they have a sufficient testimonial and letters of recommendation written upon the affections of all men. For what is it that all men labour and seek after but this? It is not any outward earthly thing that is desired for itself, but rather for the peace and contentment the mind expects in them; and, therefore, this must be of itself the proper object or good of the soul; which, if it can be had immediately without that long and endless compass about the creatures, certainly a man cannot but think himself happy, and will have no missing of other things: as if a man could live healthfully and joyfully without meat, and without all appetite for it, none but they would think him the happiest man in the world; and would think it no pain to him to want the dainties of princes, but rather that he were delivered from the wearisome necessity others laboured under. Just so is it here,—there is nothing would persuade a man to travel and toil all his life-time about the creatures, and not to suffer his soul to take rest, if he did believe to find that immediately without travel, which he endures so much travel for. And therefore the believing Christian is only a wise man, who is instructed where the things themselves, true peace and joy, do lie, and so seeks to be filled with the things themselves, for which only men seek other things; and not as other men, who catch at the shadows, that they may at length find the substance itself; for this were far about and labour in vain.

Peace is so sweet and comprehensive a word, that the Jews made their usual compellation, "Peace be unto you;" importing all felicity, and the affluence of all good. And indeed our Saviour found no fitter word to express his matchless good-will to the well-being of his disciples than this, Luke xxiv. 36, when he saluted them after his resurrection,—"peace be unto you;" which is as much as if he had wished absolute satisfaction—all content-

ment and happiness that themselves would desire. Now, this peace hath a relation to God, to ourselves, and our brethren. I will exclude none of them from the present wish; for even brotherly concord and peace suits well with the main subject of this chapter, which is, the bearing of our neighbours' infirmities, and not pleasing ourselves, and such like mutual duties of charity. But certainly the other two relations are most intrinsic to happiness; because there is nothing nearer to us than the blessed God, and next to him there is nothing comes so near us as ourselves. The foundation of all our misery is that enmity between man and God, which is as if heaven and earth would fall out into an irreconcilable discord; and upon what should follow the suspension of the light of the stars, and the withdrawing the influences of heaven, and the withholding the refreshment of the early and latter rain? If such dissension fell between them, that the heavens should be as brass to the earth, and would refuse the clouds when they cry for rain, or the herbs and minerals when they crave the influences from above, what a disconsolate and irksome dwelling-place would the earth be! What a dreary habitation would we find it! Even so it is between God and men. All our being, all our well-being, hangs upon the good aspect of his countenance; in his favour is all our life and happiness: yet, since the first rebellion, every man is set contrary to God, and in his affections and actions denounces war against heaven. Whence hath flowed the sad and woful suspension of all these blessings, and comfortable influences, which only beautify and bless the soul of man? And now there is nothing to be seen, but the terrible countenance of an angry God,—the revengeful sword of justice shaken in the word; all above us is as if the sun were turned into blackness, and the moon into blood; and behold trouble and darkness, and dimness of anguish.

Now, whenever a soul begins to apprehend his enmity and division in sad earnest, there follows an intestine war

in the conscience; the terrors of God raise up a terrible party within a man's self, and that is the bitter remembrance of his sins. These are mustered and set in order, in battle-array against a man; and every one of these, as they are thought upon, strike a dart into his heart; they shoot an arrow dipped in the wrath of God, "the poison whereof drinketh up his spirits," Job vi. 4. Though the most part of souls have now a dead calm, and are asleep, like Saul, in the field in the midst of his enemies, or as Jonas in the ship in the midst of the tempest; yet, when they awake out of that deep stupidity, God will write bitter things against them, and make them to possess their iniquities; and they shall find that he hath numbered their steps, and watched over their sin, and sealed it as in a bag, to keep it in record. Then he will renew his witnesses against them, and put their feet in the stocks; and they shall then apprehend that changes and war are against them, and that they are set as a mark against God, and so they will be a burden to themselves, Job vii. 20. O what a storm will it raise in the soul! Now, to lay this tempest, and calm this wind, is the business of the gospel; because it reveals these glad tidings of peace and reconciliation with God, which can only be the ground of a perfect calm in the conscience. Herein is the atonement and propitiation set forth,—that which, by its fragrant and sweet smell, hath pacified Heaven, and appeased justice; and this only is able to pacify the troubled soul, and lay the tumultuous waves of the conscience, Eph. ii. 13—20. Col. i. 19—22. This gives the answer of a good conscience, which is like the sweet and gentle breathing of a calm day after a tempest, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Now, it is not so much God reconcilable to sinners, as God in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. Though some men be always suspicious of God, yet they have more reason to suspect their own willingness; for what is all the gospel, but a declaration of his love, and laying down the enmity, or rather, that he had never hostile affections to his elect, and so was all this while

providing a ransom for himself, and bringing about the way to kill the enmity; and having done that by the blood of Christ, he will follow us with entreaties of reconcilement, and requests us to lay down our hostile affections, and the weapons of our warfare; and for him, we have no more ado but to believe his love, while we are yet enemies. This, I say, carried into the heart with power, gives that sweet, calm, and pleasant rest to the soul, after all its tossings; this commands the winds and waves of the conscience, and they obey it. It is true that many find no trouble within; and some, upon terrible apprehensions of sin and wrath, find ease for the time in some other thing, as a diversion to some other object; and turning aside with Cain, to build cities to worldly pleasures, or employments, or company, that the noise of them may put the clamours of their conscience to silence. Some parleys and cessations men have, some treaties of this kind for peace with God; but, alas! the most part make no entire and full peace; they are always upon making the bargain, and cannot close it, because of their engagements to sin, and their own corrupt lusts; and therefore many do nothing else than what men do in war,—to seek some advantage, or to gain time by these delays. But O the latter end will be sad, when he shall arm you against yourselves! Were it not better, now while it is to-day, not to harden your hearts? Now joy is the effect of peace, and it is the very overflowing of it in the soul, upon the lively apprehension of the love of God, and the inestimable benefit of the forgiveness of sins. It is peace in a large measure, pressed down and running over, breaking without the ordinary channel, and dilating itself to the affecting and refreshing of all that is in man —"My heart and my flesh shall rejoice." This is the very exuberance, and high-sailing tide of the sea of peace that is in a believer's heart; it swells sometimes upon the full aspect of God's countenance, beyond the ordinary bounds, and cannot be kept within in gloriation and boasting in God. When a soul is so illustrated with the Holy

Ghost, as to make a kind of presence and possession of what is hoped for, that makes the soul to enlarge itself in joy: this makes the inward jubilation,—the heart as it were to leap for joy. Now, truly, this is not the ordinary entertainment of a Christian; it is neither so universal nor constant as peace. These fruits, so matured and ripe, like the grapes of Canaan, are not set down always upon the table of every Christian, nor yet at all to some; it is enough that he keep the soul in that healthful temper, that it is neither quite cast down nor discouraged, through difficulties and infirmities: it is sufficient if God speak peace to the soul, though it be not acquainted with those raptures of Christianity. This hath so much sense in it, that it is not meet to be made ordinary food, lest we should mistake our pilgrimage for heaven, and fall upon the building of tabernacles in this mount; for certainly the soul would conclude it good to be here, and could not so earnestly long for the city and country in heaven, if they had any more but some tastes of that joy to sharpen their desires after the full measure of it. It is a fixed and unchangeable statute of heaven, that we should here live by faith, and not by sense. And, indeed, the following of God fully in the ways of obedience, upon the dim apprehensions of faith, is more praiseworthy, and hath more of the true nature of obedience in it, than when present sweetness hath such a predominant influence. Besides, our vessel here is weak and crazy, and most unfit for such strong liquor as the joys of the Holy Ghost. Some liquors have such a strong spirit in them, that they will burst an ordinary bottle; and, as our Saviour says, "No man puts new wine in old bottles, for they will burst," Matt. ix. 17. Truly the joy of heaven is too strong for our old ruinous and earthly vessels to bear, till the body "put on incorruption, and be fashioned like unto Christ's own glorious body:" for it cannot be capable of all the fulness of this joy; and yet there is a kind of all fulness of peace and joy in this life, "be filled with all joy and peace." Indeed, the fulness of this life is emptiness to the next; but yet

there is a fulness in regard of the abundance of the world, —their joys and pleasures,—their peace and contentation in the things of this life, are but like "the crackling of thorns under a pot," that makes a great noise, but vanishes quickly in a filthy security, Eccles. vii. 8. It is such, that like the loudest "laughter of fools, there is sorrow at the heart, and in the end of it is heaviness," Prov. xiv. 13. It is but at the best a superfice,—an external garb drawn over the countenance—no cordial or solid thing; it is not heart-joy, but a picture and shadow of the gladness of the heart in the outward countenance; and whatever it be, sorrow, grief, and heaviness follow at its heels, by a fatal inevitable necessity; so that there is this difference between the joys and pleasures of the world, and dreams in the night,—for the present there is more solidity, but the end is hugely different. When men awake out of a dream, they are not troubled with it, that their imaginary pleasure was not true; but the undivided companion of all earthly joys and contentment is grief and vexation. I wonder if any man would love that pleasure or contentment, if he were assured to have an equal measure of torment after it, suppose the pain of the stone or such like; but when this misery is eternal, O what madness and folly is it to plunge into it! "I said of laughter, it is madness, and of mirth, what doth it?" But the Christian's peace and joy is of another nature, yet as no man knoweth "the hidden manna, the new name, and the white stone, but he that hath it," Rev. ii. 17, so no man can apprehend what these are, till he taste them and find them. What apprehension, think ye, can a beast form of his own nature? or what can a man conceive of the angelical nature? Truly this is without our sphere, and that without theirs. Now, certainly, the wisest and most learned men cannot form any lively notion of the life of a Christian, till he find it; it is without his sphere and comprehension, therefore it is called "the peace of God which passes all understanding," Phil. iv. 7. "A joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Sup-

pose men had never seen any other light but the stars of the firmament, or the light of a candle, they could not conceive any thing more glorious than the firmament in a clear night; yet we that have seen the sun and moon, know that these lights are but darkness unto them. Or, to use that comparison that the Lord made once effectual to convert a nobleman, that a man did see some men and women dancing afar off, and heard not their music, he would judge them mad or at least foolish; but coming near hand, and hearing their instruments, and perceiving their order, he changes his mind; even so, whatever is spoken of the joy of the Spirit or the peace of conscience, and whatsoever is seen by the world of abstaining from the pleasures of the world, the natural mind cannot but judge it foolishness or melancholy; because they do not hear that pleasant and sweet harmony and consort of the word and Spirit in the souls of God's children; else, if they heard the sweet psalmist of Israel piping, they could not but find an inward stirring and impulse in themselves to dance too.

Now the third stream is hope;—"that ye may abound in hope," because this is not the place nor time of possession; our peace and joy here is often interrupted, and very frequently weakened: it is not so full a table as the Christian's desire requires. Our present enjoyments are not able to mitigate the very pain of a Christian's appetite, or to supply his emptiness; therefore there must be an accession of hope to complete the feast, and to pacify the eagerness of the soul's desire, till the fulness of joy and peace come: and if he have spare diet otherwise, yet he hath allowance of abundance of hope—to take as much of that as he can hold; and that is both refreshing and strengthening. Truly there is nothing men have, or enjoy, that can please, without the addition of hope unto it. All men's eyes are forward to futurity, and often men prejudge themselves of their present enjoyments, by the gaping expectation of, and looking after things to come. But the Christian's hope being a very sure anchor cast within the vail, upon the

sure ground of heaven, it keeps the soul firm and stedfast; though he be not unmoved yet from tossing or floating, though it may fluctuate a little, yet his hope regulates and restrains it; and it being an helmet, it is a strong preservative against the power and force of temptations: it is that which guards the main part of a Christian, and keeps resolutions after God untouched and unmaimed.

Now, my beloved, would ye know the fountain and original of these sweet and pleasant streams? It is the God of hope, and the power of the Holy Ghost. There is no doubt of power in God, to make us happy and give us peace; but power seems most opposite to peace, especially with enemies: and it seems whatsoever he can do yet, that his justice will restrain his power from helping us; but there is no doubt but the God of power, as well as hope, both can and will do it: He hath this style from his promises, and gracious workings, because he hath given us ground of hope in himself; he is the chief object of hope, and the chief cause of hope in us too; therefore we would look up to this fountain, for here all is to be found.

But I haste to speak a word of the *third* thing proposed, viz. The channel that these streams run into. It is believing, not doing. Indeed this stream once ran in this channel; but since paradise was defaced, and the rivers that watered it turned another way, this hath done so too. It is true, that righteousness and holy walking is a notable mean to preserve this pure, and unmixed, and constant; for indeed the peace of our God will never lodge well with sin, the enemy of God, nor can that joy which is so pure a fountain run in abundance in an impure heart. It will not mix with carnal pleasures and toys, but yet the only ground of true peace and joy is found out by believing in another: whatsoever ye do else to find them, dispute and debate never so long about them, toil all night and all day in your examinations of yourselves, yet you shall not catch this peace, this solid peace, and this surpassing joy, but by quite overlooking yourselves, and fixing your hearts upon another object, that is Jesus Christ. "Peace and

joy in believing;" and what is that believing? Mistake it not; it is not particular application at first. I delight rather to take it in another notion, for the cordial assent and consent of the soul to the promises of the gospel. I say but one word more, viz. meditation and deep consideration of these truths, is certainly believing; and believing brings peace, and peace brings joy.

X.

Matth. xi. 16.—But whereunto shall I liken this generation?

When our Lord Jesus, who had the tongue of the learned, and spoke as never man spake, did now and then find a difficulty to express the matter herein contained, what shall we do? The matter indeed is of great importance, a soul-matter, and therefore of great moment; a mystery, and therefore not easily expressed. No doubt he knows how to paint out this to the life, that we might rather behold it with our eyes, than hear it with our ears; yet he uses this manner of expression, to stamp our hearts with a deep apprehension of the weight of the matter, and the depth of it. It concerns us all, as much as we can, to consider and attend unto it.

Two things are contained here,—the entertainment Christ gets in the world, of the most part; and the entertainment he gets from a few children, of whom he is justified. I say, it concerns you greatly to observe this, for Christ observed it very narrowly, what success both his forerunner and himself had. Christ begins here to expostulate with the multitudes, and with the scribes and Pharisees about it; but ere all be done he will complain to the Father: He now complains unto you, that he gets not ready acceptance amongst you. If it be possible that you may, repent of the great injury done to the Son of God; no, not so much to Christ, as your own souls; "for all who hate me love death, and he that sin-

neth against me wrongeth his own soul," Prov. viii. 36. Woe unto your souls, for you have not hurt Christ, by so much despising him; ye have not prejudiced the gospel, but ye have rewarded evil to yourselves, Isa. iii. 9. I say, Christ now complains of you to yourselves, if so be you will bethink yourselves in earnest, and return to yourselves; but if ye will not, he will at length complain to the Father; when he renders up the kingdom, and gives an account of his administration unto God, he will report what entertainment ye gave his word. For he will say, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought with such a man; all threatenings, all entreaties would not prevail with him to forsake his drunkenness, his swearing, his covetousness, his oppressions," &c. You know Christ's last long prayer, John xvii. He gives an account in it what acceptance he had among men, when he is finishing his ministry. These are the men he now speaks unto in the text, "Whereunto shall I liken this generation?" Thus he speaks of them to his Father, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." Well, then, this is not so light a matter as ye apprehend; ye come to hear daily, but know ye not that ye shall give an account of your hearing? Know ye not that there is one who observes and marks all the impressions which the world makes in your consciences? He knows all the blows of the sword of the word, that return making no impression on your consciences. Christ says to the multitudes here, "And what went ye out for to see?" I pray you, what went you out for to see, seeing ye have not believed his report? Why went ye out into the wilderness? Know ye who spake, or in whose authority? May we not speak in these terms unto you, when we consider the little fruit of the gospel? What do you come to hear, and what do ye come to hear every Sabbath, and other solemn days? I pray you, ask at your own heart, what your purpose is: wherefore do ye come together so often? Men are rational in their business; they do nothing but for some purpose;

they labour, and plough, and sow, in order to reap; they buy, and sell, to get gain: they have many projects, and designs they still seek to accomplish; and shall we be only in matters of salvation and damnation so irrational? Shall we, in the greatest thing of the greatest moment, because of eternal concernment, be as perishing brutish beasts, that know not what we aim at? Christ will in the end ask you, What went ye out of your own houses so often to hear? What went ye out to see? I pray you what will ye answer? If ye say, We went to hear the word of the Lord, then he shall answer you, and why did not ye obey it? Then why did ye not hear it as my word, and regard it more? If ye shall say, We went to hear a man speak some good words unto us, for an hour or two; then is Christ also engaged against you, because he sent him, and ye despise him; "for he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." So ye shall be catched both the ways. If ye think this to be God's word, I wonder why ye do not receive it then, with the stamp of his authority in your hearts; why do ye not bow your hearts to it? for it shall endure for ever, and judge you. Why do you sit so many fair offers, so many sad warnings? Are not the drunkards warned every day by this word, that the curse of the Lord shall come upon them? Is not every one of you, according to your several stations and circumstances, warned to forsake your wicked ways, and your evil thoughts; to flee from the wrath to come, before the decree of the Lord pass forth, and before his fury burn as an oven. And if ye think these to be the true words of the eternal God, and the sayings of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the truth itself; if ye believe it as ye profess to do, why do ye not get out of the way of that wrath, which continues upon those sinners daily? Shall ye escape the judgment of God? Shall not his word overtake you, though ministers that speak unto you will not live for ever? But these words they speak will surely take hold of you, as they did your fathers, that ye shall say, "Like as the Lord of hosts hath said he will do

unto us, so hath he done," Zech. i. 6. If ye do not think this is God's word, I beseech you, why do you come hither so oft? What do ye come to hear? Why take ye so much needless pains? Your coming here seems to speak, that you think it to be God's word, and yet your conversation declares more plainly that ye believe it not. Yet Christ takes notice of you; and see that ye, beloved, search, that so ye may hear the word as in the sight of the all-seeing God, and in his sight who will judge you according to it: a sermon thus heard will be more profitable than all that ever ye heard. Now, to what purpose speak we of these things unto you, and why do we choose this discourse, when ye expect to hear public things? I will tell you the reason of it,—because I conceive this is the great sin of the times, and the most reprehensive and fountain-sin, the root of all our profanity, and malignity; even this which Christ points out in this similitude. The great blessing and privilege of Scotland is the gospel; ye all must grant this. Now then, the great misery and sin of this nation is, the abuse and contempt of the glorious gospel; and if once we could make you sensible of this, ye would mourn for all other particular sins.

The words are very comprehensive,—ye shall find in them the different manifestations of God in his word, reduced to two heads: The Lord either mourns to us to make us mourn, or joys to us to make us dance. A similitude and likeness is the end of all the manifestations of himself, that we be one with him: therefore, when he would move our affections in us, he puts on the like, and clothes himself in his word and dispensation with such a habit as is suitable. So ye have both law and gospel,—he laments in the one, he pipes in the other; both sad and glad dispensations of his providence may be subordinate to these; the one, I mean his judgments, representing that to our eyes which his law did to our ears, making that visible of his justice, which we heard; the other, I mean mercies, represents that to our eyes which the gospel did

to our ears, and making his good-will, his forbearance, and long-suffering, and compassion, visible, that men might say, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God." Now, these should stir up suitable affections in men; this is their intendment and purpose,—to stir up joy, and grief, sorrow for sin on the one hand, and joy in the Lord's salvation on the other hand; hatred of sin by the one, and the love of Christ by the other.

But what is the entertainment these get in the world? Ye shall see it different,—in some it meets with different affections, or it makes them, and moves them, and these do justify wisdom. The accomplishment and performance of God's purposes in souls, justifies his word; they justify Christ, by believing in him; Christ justifies us, by making us to believe in him, and apply his own righteousness to us. He that believes justifies the word, and Christ in the word, because he sets to his seal that God is true; and Christ likewise justifies the believer, by applying his righteousness unto him. The believer justifies wisdom, by acknowledging it as the Father's wisdom; Christ justifies the believer by making him, and pronouncing him righteous, and a son of God. But in others, and in these a great many, it generally meets with hard hearts, stupid, and insensible, incapable of these impressions. You know music is very apt to work upon men's spirits, and doth stir up several passions in them, as joy or grief: now Christ and his ministers are the musicians that do apply their songs to catch men's ears and hearts, if so be they may stop their course and not perish. These are blessed syrens that do so, and pipe day and night, in season, and out of season, some sad and woful ditties of men's sin, and God's wrath, of the day of judgment, of eternal punishment, that if it be possible, men may fore-apprehend these ills, before they fall into them without recovery. These are the boys in the market-places that strive to sadden your hearts, and make you lament in time, before the day of howling, and weeping, and gnashing of teeth; these also have as many joyful and glad ditties, sweeten-

ing the sad. It may be, diverse men have diverse parts of this harmony: John had the woful and sad part, Christ took the joyful and glad part, so the one answered the other, and both made a complete harmony. It may be one man in one spring [*i. e.* piece of music] mixes these two, and makes good music alone; the one part is intended to move men to grief, and mourn once that they may not mourn for ever; the other to comfort in the meantime those that mourn, to mix their mourning with the hope of that blessed delivery in Jesus Christ. Now what is the entertainment these get from the most part? They can neither move men to one affection or other, they will neither mourn nor dance, and the children complain of some rude and rustic spirits, that are uncapable of music, and cannot discern one spring from another. So does Christ complain of a generation of men,—they can neither repent nor believe, "they care for none of these things;" his threatenings and denunciations of wrath are a small thing to them, and his consolations appear also to be inconsiderable: their souls are otherwise taken up, that they have no sense to discern the transcendent excellency of eternal things. We would then press upon your consciences these three things. First, That the word of God, comprehending the law and gospel, contains both the saddest ditties, and the most joyful and sweet songs in the world. Next, we would discover unto you the great sin, and extreme stupidity of this generation, of which ye are a part, that ye may know the controversy God hath with the land. And then at length we would labour to persuade you to the right use of this gospel, and justifying of wisdom, if ye would be his children.

The law is, indeed, a sad song, and lamentation, it surpasses all the complaints and lamentations among men; ye know the voice in which it was given at Sinai, it was delivered with great thunders, great terrors accompanied it. The law is a voice of words and thunder, which made those that heard it entreat that it should not be spoken to them any more; for they could not endure the word that

was commanded, Heb. xii. 18, 19. Ye would think, if they were holy men, they would not be afraid of it, "but so terrible was that sight, and that voice," that it even made holy Moses himself "exceedingly fear and quake:" it made a great host, more numerous than all the inhabitants of Scotland, to tremble exceedingly. And why was it so sad and terrible?—even because it was a law that publishes transgression, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." If there were no fear of judgment and wrath, yet I am sure there is none that can reasonably consider that excellent estate which he was once in, that throne of eminency above the creatures, that height of dignity in conformity and likeness to God, that incomparable happiness of communion with the supreme fountain of life; now I say, none can duly ponder these things, but they will think sin to be the greatest misery of mankind. They must be affected with the sense of that inestimable treasure they lost, and how sad a consideration it is to view that cloud of beastly lusts, of flesh and earth, that was interposed between the Sun of righteousness and our souls, which hath made this perpetual eclipse, this eternal night and darkness. How sad is it to look upon our ruin, and compare it with that stately edifice of innocent Adam! How are we fallen from the height of our excellency, and made lower than the beasts, when we were once but "a little lower than the angels!" But then if ye shall consider all that followed upon this,—the innumerable abominations of men, so contrary to that holy law, and God's holiness, that hath flowed from this corrupt fountain, and hath defiled so many generations of men, that they are all bruises and putrefying sores, and in nothing sound from the head to the foot; the soul within becomes the sink of all pollution, the members without, the conduits it runs through, and made weapons of unrighteousness against our Maker. And what a consideration is this alone,—how vile and ugly doth that holy and spiritual law make the most refined and polished civilian! He that hath poorest naturals, most extracted from the

dregs of the multitude, and O how abominable will he appear in this glass, in this perfection of liberty! So that men would despise themselves, and repent in dust and ashes, if once they did see their own likeness; ye would run from yourselves, as children that have been taken up with their own beauty, but are spoiled with the small-pox; let them look into a glass, and it will almost make them mad. But if we shall stay, and hear out the trumpet which sounds louder and louder, there will be yet more reason of trembling; for it becomes a voice publishing judgment and wrath, "for therein is the wrath of God revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom. i. 18. It speaks much of all men's sins, "that every mouth may be stopped; but the voice waxed louder and louder," the spring [*i. e.* piece of music] grows still sadder, "that all the world may become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. It publishes first the command, and then follows the sad and weighty curse of God, "Cursed is every one that abides not in all things which are written in the law," Gal. iii. 10. As many curses as breaches of the law! And what a dreadful song is this, "Ye shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." If he had said, ye shall be eternally banished from God, what an incomparable loss had this been? Men would lead an unpleasant life, who had fallen from the expectation of an earthly kingdom: but what shall it be to fall from the expectation of a heavenly kingdom? But when withal there is an eternal pain with that eternal loss, and an incomparable pain, with incomparable loss, everlasting destruction from God's presence joined with this; always to be destroyed, and never to be made an end of. It is the comfort of bodily torments, and even of death itself, that it shall be quickly gone, and the destruction ends in the destruction of the body, and so there is no more pain; but here is an eternal destruction, not a dying, and then a death, but an eternal dying without tasting death. Now consider (if ye can indeed think) what it is to have a law

of enmity, and a hand-writing of ordinances against us! as many curses written up in God's register against us, as there were transgressions of the law multiplied, and God himself engaged to be against us, to have no mercy on us, and not to spare us!—could any heart endure, or any hands be strong, if they would duly apprehend this? Would the denunciation of war, the publishing of affliction, the sentence of earthly judges, would they once be remembered beside this? If ye would imagine all the torments and rackings that have been found out by the most cruel tyrants against men, all to be entered on, and all the grief and pain of those who have died terrible deaths to be joined in one, what would it be to this? It would be but as a drop of that wrath and vexation, that wicked souls find in hell, and in which they are drowned, and that everlastingly without end.

But we must not dwell always at mount Sinai; we are called to mount Zion, the city of the living God, to hear the sweet and calm voice of peace, to hear the sweet and pleasant songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and of our glorious peace-maker, Christ Jesus, the desire of all nations, and the blessing of all the families of the earth. His song is a joyful sound, and blessed are they that hear it: "I am come," says Christ, "to seek and to save that which was lost;" I am come to save sinners, and the chief of sinners; let all you who find your spirits saddened by the law, who find yourselves accursed from the Lord, and cannot be justified by the law of Moses, come unto me, cast your souls upon me, and ye shall find ease to them. Are ye pressed under the heavy burden of sin and wrath? Come unto me and I will give you ease, put it over upon me. Do you think yourselves not wearied or burdened enough, and yet would be quit of sin and misery? Do your souls desire to embrace this salvation? Come unto me, and I will not cast you out; whoever comes, on whatsoever terms, in whatsoever condition, I will in no wise cast you out. Do not suppose cases to exclude yourselves,—I know no case; ye who cannot be justified by the law of Moses, come unto me, and ye

shall be justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Ye who have no righteousness of your own, and see the righteousness of God revealed with wrath against you, now come to me, I have a righteousness of God, beside the law, and will reveal it to you. Ye have a band of enmity, and hand-writing of ordinances against you, but come unto me, for I have cancelled it in the cross, and slain the enmity, so it shall never do you any harm. In a word, this is the messenger whose feet are beautiful, that publishes glad tidings of peace; this is the Mediator, who reconciles us unto God. The whole gospel and covenant of grace is a bundle of precious promises; it is a set of pleasant melodious songs, that may accompany us through our wearisome pilgrimage, and refresh us till we come unto the city, where we shall all sing the song of the Lamb. What a song is liberty to captives and prisoners, light to them that sit in darkness, opening of the eyes to the blind, gladness of spirit to those who are heavy in spirit! Ye would all think salvation and remission of sins a sweet song, but if ye would discern it, ye would find nothing sweeter in the gospel than this redemption from all iniquity, from sin itself, and from all kind of misery. How lovely and pleasant a thing is that when Christ hath piped unto you, the remission of all sins in his own blood, then he plays the most sweet spring, the renunciation of sin, and dying to this world, by his death and resurrection. Many listen to the song of justification, but they will not abide to hear out all the song. He is our sanctification, and redemption, as well as our righteousness; always to whomsoever he is pleasant, when he puts his yoke upon them, he will be more pleasant in bearing it. Whosoever gladly hears Jesus singing of righteousness and holiness, they shall also hear him sing of glory and happiness; those who dance at the springs of righteousness and sanctification, what an eternal triumph and exultation waits on them, when he is singing the song of complete redemption!

Are these things so? Is this the law, and this the gospel? Do they daily sound in our ears, and what entertainment, I pray you, do they get from this generation? Indeed Christ's complaint hath place here,—whereunto shall our generation be likened? For he hath lamented to us, and we have not mourned; he hath piped to us, and we have not danced; we will neither be made glad nor sad by these things. How long hath the word of the Lord been preached unto you, and whose heart trembled at it? "Shall the lion roar, and the beasts of the field not be afraid? The lion hath roared often to us; God hath spoke often, who will not fear? and yet who doth fear? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, in congregations every day, that terrible trumpet of mount Sinai that proclaims war between God and men, and yet will not the people be afraid?" Amos iii. 6—8. Have not every one of you heard your transgressions told you? Are ye not guilty of all the breaches of God's holy law? Hath not the curse been pronounced against you for these, and yet who believes the report? Ye will not do so much as sit down and examine your guiltiness, till your mouth be stopped, and till ye put it in the dust before God's justice. And when we speak of hell unto you, and of the curses of God passed upon all men, you bless yourselves in your own eyes, saying, "Peace, peace, even though ye walk in the imagination of your own hearts, add sin to sin, and drunkenness to thirst," Deut. xxix. 20. Now, when all this is told you, that many shall be condemned, and few saved, and that God is righteous to execute judgment, and render vengeance on you, ye say within yourselves, for God's sake, is all this true? But where is the mourning at his lamentations, when there is no feeling or believing them to be true? Your minds are not convinced of the law of God, and how shall your hearts be moved? Christ Jesus laments unto you; he wept over Jerusalem "How often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldest not!" What means he? Certainly he would have you to sympathize with your own condition, when he

that is in himself blessed, and needs not us, is so affected with our misery. How should we sympathize with our own misery? God scorns to be affected with it, though there be no shadow of turning in him; yet he clothes his words with such affections, "Why will ye die?" "O that my people had hearkened unto me!" He sounds the proclamation before the stroke, if it be possible to move you to some sense of your condition that concerns you most nearly. Yet, who judges himself, that he may not be judged? The ministers of the Lord, or Christians, may put to their ear, and hearken to men in their retiring places, but who repents in dust and ashes, and says, "What have I done?" Jer. viii. 6. But every man goes on in his course without stop. The word ye hear on the sabbath-day against your drunkenness, your oppressions, your covetousness, your formality, &c., it doth not lay any bands on you to keep you from these things. Long may we hearken to you in secret, ere we hear many of you mourn for these things, or turn from them. Where is he that is afraid of the wrath of God, though it be often denounced against him? Do not men sleep over their time, and dream of escaping from it? Every man hath a refuge of lies he trusts in, and will not forsake his sins.

Again, on the other hand, whose heart rejoices within them to hear the joyful sound? Because men do not receive the law, and mourn when he laments, they cannot receive the gospel,—it cannot be glad news to any but the soul that receives sad tidings, the sentence of death in its bosom. Therefore, Christ Jesus is daily offered, and as often despised, as a thing of nought and of no value. Ye hear every day of deliverance from eternal wrath, and a kingdom purchased unto you; and ye are no more affected than if we came and told you stories of some Spanish conquest that belonged not unto you. Would not the ears and hearts of some men be more tickled with idle and unprofitable tales, (that are for no purpose, but driving away the present time), than they are with this everlast-

ing salvation? Some men have more pleasure to read an idle book, than to search the holy scriptures, though in them this inestimable jewel of eternal life be hid. The vain things of this present world have a voice unto you of pleasure, and profit, and credit; they will pipe unto you, and ye will listen unto their sound; "but ye know not that the dead are there, and that it is the way to the chambers of hell." These, indeed, are syrens that entice passengers by the way with their sweet songs; and having allured them to follow, lead them to perishing. Here is the voice that is come down from heaven, "The Word that was with God; and he is the way, the truth, and the life." He is gone before you, and undertakes to guide you; he comes and calls upon simple men; the Father's Wisdom calls the simple ones to understand wisdom, to find life and peace; will ye then so far wrong your own souls as to refuse? And yet the most part are so busied with this world, and their own lusts, that the sweetest and pleasantest offers in the gospel sound not so sweet unto them as the clink of their money, or the sound of oil and wine in a cup; any musician would affect them more than the sweet singer of Israel, the anointed of the God of Jacob, Always those souls that have mourned and danced according to Christ's motions, and whose hearts have exulted within them, at the message and word of reconciliation,—blessed are ye, ye are of another generation, children of wisdom: ye who desire to hear his voice, "Let me hear thy voice, O thou that dwellest in the garden; the companions hear thy voice, for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is comely." If this be the voice of thy heart, blessed art thou; thou mayest indeed dance who hast rejoiced in his salvation, or who hast mourned at his lamentation; thy dancing is but yet coming, for his piping is but yet coming, when all the companies of wisdom's children shall be gathered together in that general assembly of the first-born. Christ Jesus, the head of all principalities, and, in special, the head of the body the church, shall lead the ring; and there shall be eternal praises and songs of those that follow the Lamb; they

shall echo unto him who shall begin that song of the hallelujah, "Salvation, blessing, honour, glory, and power to the Lamb," &c.

Now, whereunto shall this generation be likened, that are not affected with these things? What strange stupidity and senselessness is it, that men are not affected with things of so great and so near concernment? It would require the art of men to express the obstinacy of some Christian professors; or rather, a pen steeped in hell. He would be thought unnatural, that would not grieve at his friend's death, or loss; and what shall it be called that men will not sympathize with themselves, that is, their souls? If we speak to you of corporal calamities, and ye could not be moved, it were great security; but what stupidity is it, that men will not consider their own soul. What shall ye profit, if ye lose your precious souls, and be cast away? It is the greatest loss that is told you, and the greatest gain. Your affections are moved with perishing things; every thing puts them up or down, and casts the balance with you. What deep ignorance and inconsideration is it, that ye who can mourn for loss of goods, of children, of health, of friends, that ye cannot be moved to sorrow for the sin of your soul, for the eternal loss of your soul! Other sorrows cannot profit you; but this is the only profitable mourning. If we were told your sin and misery to make you despair, and mourn eternally, ye had some excuse to delay, and forget it as long as ye can; but when all this is told you that you may escape from it, will ye not consider it when ye are desired to mourn, that ye may be comforted for ever; will ye not mourn? We would have you to anticipate the day of judgment, that ye may judge yourselves, and then you shall not be judged. What folly and madness is this to delay it till endless, remediless mourning come, a day that hath no light mixed with darkness! Those that now mourn at that law, and for their sin, and dance at the promises of the gospel, may well be called children of wisdom; and oh, how may this generation be said to be begotten of foolishness

as their father, and wildness as their mother! for is there any such folly as this,—to lose a man's self absolutely and irrecoverably, for that which they cannot have always? Is there any such folly as to refuse this healing medicine, for the little bitterness which is in it, and then to incur eternal death?

Now, what should we do then? What doth the word of God call you to do? This is it,—to mourning and rejoicing; and this is to justify wisdom: these two are the pulse of a Christian: according as he finds his grief and joy, so is he. All of you have these affections; but they are not right placed, they are not pitched upon suitable objects. The worldling hath no other joy but carnal mirth, no other grief but that which is carnal; these are limited within the bounds of time: some loss, or some gain, some pleasure or pain, some honour or dishonour; these are the poles all his affections turn about on. Now, then, we exhort and beseech you, as ye would flee from the wrath to come, consider it now, and fear it; as ye would not partake with this untoward generation in their plagues, so be not like them in their stupidity. Ye are called to consider your sins and God's wrath, that ye may turn unto the Lord, and then you will hear the voice of peace crying unto you, "Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee." If we would submit unto the justice of God, or unto the holiness and righteousness of his law in condemning you, you justify wisdom in part; but ye who have justified wisdom thus far, do not condemn wisdom after it: justify the gospel in believing upon Jesus Christ. Receive it as a true and faithful saying with your hearts, and this shall justify you: and if ye justify the wisdom of God in prescribing the righteousness of Christ unto you, ye will also justify wisdom in prescribing a rule of holiness and obedience unto you, and count all his paths pleasantness and peace. Ye must dance at the commandments, as well as the promises; because all God's precepts are really promises. Ye have nothing to do but to believe them as the way; and then to dance until ye all sing the song of the Lamb with the saints above.

Now, if ye believe his law and gospel, and be suitably affected with these, ye are led also to sympathize with all the dispensations of his providence. Doth God lament to you in his works as well as his word? O then, Christians, we exhort you to mourn. Yet mourning, because of his lamentable providence, should be joined with rejoicing in his word; "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." We are a stupid generation, that can neither see, nor hear, neither can we be affected with what we see or hear; do not his judgments go forth as a lamp that burneth; yet who considers? Doth not the lion roar; but who is afraid? Is there not a voice publishing affliction? Hath not God's rod a loud voice; and yet who hears it, who fears? We do not receive agreeable impressions of the Lord's dealing with us; but every man puts the day of evil far from him: he will not apprehend public rods till they become personal, and therefore they must become personal. If ye were mourning in a penitent manner, as a repenting soul laments, would not our fast-days have more soul-affliction attending them? If ye did dance as God pipes in his providence, would not our solemn feasts have more soul-rejoicing and heavenly mirth? Alas! for that deep sleep that has fallen upon so many Christians! How few stir up themselves to take hold upon God, though he hides his face, and threateneth to depart from us! "For the Lord is with you while ye are with him; if ye seek him, and search for him with all you heart, you will find him; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

XI.

1 Tim. i. 5.—Now the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.

In this chapter, the apostle, after the inscription of this epistle, repeats a former commandment that he had given to Timothy,—how he should both teach himself, and by

his authority, (committed unto him by an extraordinary commission), see that other ministers teach so also. Paul, almost in all his epistles, sets himself against legal preachers and false teachers. It was a common error in the primitive times, to confound the law and grace, in the point of righteousness; or to make free justification inconsistent with the moral law. Therefore, our apostle makes it his chief study to vindicate the doctrine of the gospel: he preaches the gospel, and yet is no Antinomian; he preaches the law, and yet is no legal preacher; he exalts Christ more than the Antinomian can do, and yet he presses holiness more than the mere legalist can do. He excludes the law in the point of justification and pardon; and then brings it in again to the justified man's hand. If these words were rightly understood, and made use of, it would put an end to the many useless controversies of the present time, and reform many of our practices.

There are as many practical abuses among Christians concerning the law, and the gospel, as there are speculative errors among other sects. In the former he more particularly directs him what to take a care of, that men may neither spend their own, or their neighbours' time, in foolish, unnecessary, or impertinent questions, that tend nothing to the edification of the body of Christ, or in building them up in our most holy faith,—the doctrine of Christ Jesus, and faith in it. And in this verse, he shews the true meaning and purpose of the law and commandment, when he meets these doctors, and draws an argument against them from their own doctrine. They boasted of the law, and were counted very zealous of it; but as it is said of the Jews, "they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, because they did not submit unto the righteousness of God." They were also zealous for the commandment, but neither God nor the commandment would give them thanks. Why?—because they wholly mistake and pervert the meaning and purpose of the law, as long as they make the law inconsistent with the gospel, or would mix it with it, in the point of justifi-

cation; they do it not unto edification in faith (as it is read) and as they ought to do, verses 4, 5, 6. We think this evangelic sentence, but rawly, yea, legally exponed by many, when they look upon the words as they lie here, "the end of the commandment is love, for love worketh no evil, and is the fulfilling of the whole law;" and this love is described to be pure and sincere, by the following properties. But we conceive the main business is not to describe love, or to oppose this unto their contentions about trifling questions: we choose rather to understand the text another way, according to the order of nature, which also the words themselves give ground for, "The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, out of faith unfeigned." So, then, according to the phraseology and meaning of the words, love is not first, but faith must be first, and primarily intended; so that the sense of the words is this, The end of the commandment is unfeigned faith, from whence flows a good conscience, a pure heart, and love: or the end of the commandment is faith, which is proved unfeigned by these effects, that it gives the answer of a good conscience, it purifies the heart, worketh by love. The effect of faith, which is love, being to our knowledge more sensible than faith itself. We think it then more native to make a pure heart, and love, marks of unfeigned faith, than faith and a good conscience the marks of love. This exposition is yet more confirmed by parallel places, Rom. x. 4, "The end of the law is Christ for righteousness, unto them that believe;" this is most principally intended, and even before love. Now it is all one to speak of faith, as to speak of Christ; for faith and Christ are inseparably joined, and faith comes not as a consideration in the gospel, abstracted from Christ the object of it, (as some enemies of Christ affirm); it justifies us not as an act or work, but as an instrument, whereby we apprehend Christ and his righteousness. For faith abstracted from Christ, is but an empty notion, and among the dung and loss that Paul would quit to be found in Christ, Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. Now this sense only

fits the scope and purpose, and leads on strongly against the false teachers. When Paul brings his argument from the law, which they defended against the gospel, they made the commandment to contradict the gospel. Paul makes the commandment to contradict them, and agree with the gospel; and to be so far from disagreeing with it, that it hath a great affinity with it, as the mean to the end: as that which is unperfect, without its own complement and perfection. Faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, quieting a man's conscience, is the very intent of the law; and the command was never given since Adam, to justify men by obedience to it, but to pursue men after Christ. And to satisfy you more fully, and clear it up, he says, though the end of the command be not to justify, but to pursue a man from it to Christ, yet the command suffers no prejudice by this means; but rather is established by faith, the end of it: because this faith persuades the heart, and makes a man obey out of love to God, whereas before it should never have got any obedience, while men sought salvation by it.

You see then, there is an admirable harmony and consent between those things that are set at variance, both in the opinion and practice of the times; for what seems more contrary than the cursing-commanding law, and the absolving-promising gospel, yet here they are agreed? Doth not justice go cross to mercy in the ordinary notion? Yet here there is a friendly subordination of justice to mercy, of the law to the gospel. Behold how faith is environed with the law,—commanding and cursing on the one hand, and obedience to the command on the other hand,—how faith is the middle party. A good conscience could neither meet with the command since Adam's fall; a pure heart and the obedience of love had cast out [*i. e.* quarrelled] with the command; but here is the union, the meeting of old friends: faith is the mediator, as it were, and the gospel comes between them, and so they dare meet again: Christ Jesus, who is our peace, to make two one, comes in the middle, and takes away the difference. The law never meets with an obedient servant or friend, till it meet first

with Christ; it can find none righteous in all the world, none upright. Here you have the law's command and curse reconciled with the gospel's promise; and absolution reconciled with new obedience unto the commands: the command leading to Christ, and Christ leading the man just back again to the command; the command serving Christ's design, and Christ serving the command. And this is the round that the believer shall go about in, until sin shall be no more—he shall be put over from one hand to another, till Christ shall be all in all; the command shall put him to Jesus, and Christ shall lead him back again under a new notion to his old master.

We may consider in the text a twofold relation that faith stands in; the relation of an end and of a cause unto the commandment; of a cause unto a good conscience, and a pure heart, and love: for these are said to be out of faith, which notes this dependence of a cause and fountain. The command is for faith; and a pure heart and love are from faith. We shall use no other division, but consider the method of these effects that flow from faith. There is an order of emanation and dependence: there is a chain here; the first link nearest faith is a good conscience, the second link is a pure heart, the third is love; the hand follows the heart, and the heart follows the conscience.

We need not be subtile in seeking our purpose on these words; we think there is more in the plain words than we can speak of. We shall only resolve the verse in these propositions, without more observation. *First*, Faith in Jesus Christ is the end of the commandment, or law. *Secondly*, There is a faith feigned, and a faith unfeigned, a true and a false faith. *Thirdly*, Unfeigned faith gives the answer of a good conscience. *Fourthly*, Faith purging the conscience, purifies the heart. *Fifthly*, Faith purifying the heart, works by love. Here, then, is the substance of all the gospel, and all this makes up an entire complete end. Faith purifying the heart, purging the conscience, and working by love, is the end of the commandment.

First, The end of the commandment or law, (for a part

is put for the whole) is faith in Christ, or Jesus Christ apprehended by faith, which is all one; for ye cannot abstract faith from Christ, for the whole gospel is a shadow without him: grace and glory is but a beam of the Sun of righteousness, that if ye come between it and Christ, it evanishes presently, Rom. x. 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes;" and if Christ be the end of the law, then faith is the end of it, because faith is the profession of Christ, and union with him. But consider, 1. That the end is not taken here for the consumption or destruction of a thing; Christ is not the end of the law in that sense, though indeed, (if the Antinomian speak ingenuously) his sense would be this,—Christ makes an end of the law; contrary to Christ's own express meaning, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," Matt. v. 17. 2. The end is either the intention or scope of a thing; the original word imports both. 3. There is an end principally and directly intended in the thing, or work itself, and an end adventitious, and of the work. We may speak either of the end the law, of its own nature, is ordained unto, or the end of the Lawgiver in promulgating the law,—these may be different. Next, concerning the law, consider, 1. That the law may be taken strictly in a limited sense, as it comprehends only the command, and the promise of life, and the curse on the breach of it; and in this sense it is frequently taken in Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and opposed to faith and the gospel, as the gospel contains promises of salvation to penitent sinners. Or, 2. It may, or useth to be so extended, as to comprehend all the administrations made under Moses, or all God's mind revealed under the Old Testament. Now in this sense, it comprehends the gospel and covenant of grace in it, as we shall hear. (1.) Faith in Christ is the intention and scope of the law; indeed, faith in Jesus is not the intention of the law itself, as it is only made up of commandments, promises, and curses; for the law as it commands, hath nothing to do but to be a rule and ob-

ligation to men, and as it curses, it condemns men, and speaks nothing of Jesus Christ, or a way to make up the breach of the law. The gospel is not contained in the law, but rather accidental to it; for Jesus Christ comes with the gospel, as if some unexpected cautioner would come in, when the Judge is as the angel that held Abraham's hand when he was to slay his son, and offer him up a burnt-offering, giving sentence to deliver him; it is an exception from the curse. But,

Secondly, Christ is directly intended and pointed out by the law. If ye consider the whole administration of Moses, that is, the law and covenant of works, though it was preached after the fall, yet it was never preached alone without the gospel, and so consider the whole administration of God's mind and ordinances, Christ is principally aimed at; for, 1. The doctrine Moses delivered in mount Sinai contained a covenant of grace. If you look to the preface of the ten commandments, it is even the chief gospel-promise, and article of the covenant. For, how could God come in terms with men after sin, but in terms of grace; and in no other terms can man stand before God, nor God be his God. And likewise, seeing the gospel was preached in paradise, and afterwards to Abraham, God could not be false in his promise made to Abraham, neither could the promulgation of the law that followed make that null which went before, Gal. iii. 17. What meant all the ceremonial law? It shadowed out Jesus Christ the only sacrifice and propitiation. And this is the sum of the gospel-salvation to penitents believing in Christ, and looking through the sacrifices unto him, and thus David's righteousness was the imputation of righteousness, and not inherent holiness, Psal. xxxii. 1, 2; Rom. iv. 5. But, 2. It uses to be a question, whether the law delivered upon mount Sinai was a covenant of works or not; some say that the law which was delivered upon mount Sinai was indeed a covenant of works, though they confess it was preached with the covenant of grace, and not delivered to them to stand by it, or of in-

tention to get righteousness by it, but to be subservient to the covenant of grace. Others speak absolutely, that the law upon mount Sinai was a covenant of grace. We conceive this is but a contention about words; the matter is clear in itself, (1.) That neither is now the gospel preached without the law, as ye may see in Christ's sermon upon the mount, and his sermon to the young man, Matt. v. vi. vii.; Mark x. 17; nor yet was then the law preached without the gospel, as ye may see in Exod. xx.; the preface to the commandments, and the second commandment, contain much of the gospel in them,—Deut. xxx. 6, 7, &c., compared with Rom. x. 6, &c., where Paul notes both the righteousness of faith and of the works of the law. (1.) Those who say the law on mount Sinai was a covenant of works, do not assert that God gave it to be a covenant of works, out of intention that men should seek salvation thereby; but they make it only a schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ and to discover our sinful condition: and those who say it was a covenant of grace, consider it in relation to God's end of sending it, and as it takes in all the administration and doctrine of Moses. So there needs be no difficulty here. The matter seems clear, that the covenant of works was preached by Moses, and so it was by Paul, Rom. x., Gal. iii.; and that neither Paul nor Moses preached the covenant of works, but as a broken covenant; not as such that men could stand unto, or be saved by. No man can preach the gospel, unless he preach the covenant of works, not because both concur to the justification of a sinner, but because the knowledge of a man's own lost condition under the one presses him to flee to the other.

Now I say, Christ Jesus, or faith in him, is the scope and intention of the law; it is the scope and intention of the Lawgiver, in giving out the law. God hath never given a command or curse since Adam's fall, but for this end,—to bring sinners unto Christ. This is the end revealed and appointed by him in his word. This we shall clear from some texts of scripture, because it is very ma-

terial, Rom. v. 20, 21. It might be questioned from the former words, Since death reigned before Moses, for sins against nature's light, what means the new entry of the written law? What was the end of the promulgation of it on mount Sinai? He answers, "the law entered that sin might abound;" that is, the world knew not sin, the letters of nature's light were worn out and rusty: men thought not of their miserable condition by nature, and did not charge themselves before God; therefore a new edition and publication of the law must be given, that all men may know how much they owe, and how they were guilty in a thousand things they never dreamed of: But wherefore serves this? "That grace might superabound where sin had abounded;" the Lord would have sin abounding in men's knowledge, and their charge to be great and weighty, that God's pardoning grace might be more conspicuous, and the discharge more sweet. We also learn, Gal. iii. 19, that the same question was moved, "Wherefore then serves the law?" Seeing the covenant of grace was preached to Abraham, what meant the publishing of a covenant of works upon mount Sinai? He answers, "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made;" and as it is said, Rom. v. 13, "For until the law sin was in the world;" it abounded in all places of the world before the law came; but men did not impute it unto themselves, nor condemn themselves as guilty; therefore the law was added to discover many hidden transgressions, and to shew them the curse they deserved. Now this law is not against the promise or covenant of grace, ver. 21, which it behoved to be, if it were not given of intention to drive men to Christ. But the 22d verse speaks out clearly the end of it; "The scripture hath concluded all men under sin," and under the curse both. To what end? That the promise by faith in Christ might come, or be given to believers; and ver. 23, "The law was a schoolmaster and teacher, to lead us unto Christ." The very doctrine of a command impossible for man to keep, was, as it were, a proclamation of

Christ Jesus to him, a complete teaching of the necessity of some other way of salvation. The law exacted obedience rigorously, even such as we could not perform, and cursed every degree of disobedience; this, if there were no more, speaks that a man cannot stand to such terms, and therefore he must flee to Jesus Christ, who mends the broken covenant.

Again, the Apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 13, 14, while he speaks of the excellency of the ministry of the gospel beyond the ministry of Moses, notwithstanding all the material glory that accompanied that ministration, as the shining of Moses' face, &c., now he opens up a great mystery here,—Moses' face shining while he was with God upon the mount. This holds forth the glory of the law as in respect of God; by counsels and inventions they saw no more but temporal mercies in it, and were not able to fix their eyes on that glory; the carnal Israelites did not break through the ministry of the law and death, to see Jesus there, because a vail was upon their hearts: they thought God had been dealing with them in the terms of a covenant of works, and they would stand to all God had said, and undertook indeed very fairly, "all which God hath commanded, we will do, and be obedient." But they perverted God's meaning of the law, and did not see Jesus intended; for they did not look stedfastly to the end of that mystery. Now what was it the vail hid them from? "for the same vail is yet on them to this day, while they read Moses and the prophets;" and when they shall be converted it shall be done away in Christ; they shall then see him in Moses' law. So then, the end of this ministry of the law was Jesus Christ, and this they could not behold.

Now, from all this, it is very clear that Jesus Christ, or faith in him, was the great purpose and end of the law, and covenant of works. The world was lying in sin; and none sought God, no, not one: neither knew they well what sin was; therefore, God sends his gospel from mount Sinai, and publishes his law in a terrible manner, that they might know the way and manner of the God

they served, and see that their obligation was infinitely beyond their ability or performance: but, poor souls, they clearly mistake the matter, and stand to the terms of the covenant of works, as if they were able to perform them. But God did not leave them so; for he adds a ceremonial law and sacrifices, to shadow out Christ Jesus. Now, says God, though ye have undertaken so well, yet I know you better than ye do yourselves,—ye will never keep one word of what you say; therefore, when ye sin, bring a sacrifice, and look to my Son, the Lamb that is to be slain, and offered up, and ye shall have pardon in him.

Secondly, Christ Jesus apprehended by faith, is the accomplishment and perfection of the law. 1. Because, Christ Jesus, or faith laying hold upon him, accomplishes the same end that the law was ordained for of itself. The law was appointed to justify men, that it might be a rule of righteousness according to which men might stand before God, and live. Now, when the law was weak through the flesh, and could not give life, Rom. viii. 3. Gal. iv. 21, and the law ordained to life, wrought more death, and made sin exceedingly sinful, Rom. vii. 10, 11, 12; therefore Jesus Christ came in the flesh, to do what the law was unable to do; and to bring many sons unto glory, that the just might live by faith, Gal. iii. 11. The law should never have gotten its end; no man should have stood before God; but the curse only would have taken place, and the promise would have been of no effect. Therefore Jesus comes, and gives obedience to the law, and delivers men from the curse of it; and by faith, puts men in as good, and even in a better condition, than they would have been by the promise; so that the justified sinner may come before God, as well as innocent Adam, and have as great confidence and assurance, and peace by faith, as he could have had by inherent holiness. Imputed righteousness comes in as a covering over the man's nakedness, and doth the turn of perfect inherent holiness.

2. Christ, or faith laying hold on him, is the end or

accomplishment of the law, because faith in Christ fulfils the righteousness of the law, in respect of a believer's personal obedience. Although the believer gave not perfect obedience, and so cannot stand in terms of justice, yet he gives sincere and upright obedience, which the law should never have got. The command wrought sin and death, by occasion of corruption, and never should any point of it be fulfilled by men; for as long as the curse was standing, no obedience could be acceptable till justice was satisfied; and though that might have been dispensed with, yet there is none that are righteous, none seek after God. No good principles of obedience were in us, but all are corrupt, and have done abominable works, and all our righteousness is as a menstruous cloth; and though upright obedience could have been yielded, yet the law exacted perfect obedience. But now, faith in our Redeemer absolves a man from the curse of the law, so that now he is not looked upon as an enemy, but a friend; and then it puts a man upon obedience to the command from new motives and principles: and thus "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk after the Spirit," Rom. viii. 4; and that imperfect obedience is accepted of God, and received off his hand, by virtue of the sacrifice and atonement of Christ. The law would accept of no less, no, not of nine commandments, if the tenth was broken. But now, God in Christ accepts of endeavours and minting, [*i. e.* doing what is imperfect or incomplete], and so is the law in some way or other accomplished, and faith leads a man on till he be perfected; he walks by faith from strength to strength, till he appear before God, and be made holy as he is holy. Faith in Christ is the end of the law,

3. Because, whatever faith wants of perfect and personal obedience, it makes it up in Christ's obedience; and thus is the law thoroughly accomplished; for what it wants in the believer, it gets in Christ. Paul would have the Romans take this way, Rom. vi. 11, "Likewise reckon ye yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto

God through Jesus Christ." Ye may gather by good consequence, that since Christ hath died to sin as a public person, so ye should die with him unto sin, and mortify sin with him; and thus may ye have consolation against your imperfect personal mortification,—ye were thoroughly mortified in Christ. So the believer may look unto Jesus as one who hath given obedience even unto the death, and that not in his own name but for us, that the imperfect holiness and obedience of every sound believer may have his complete righteousness to cover it, and come next the Father's eye. And this is the law fulfilled, and this way doth faith not make void, but establish the law, Rom. iii. 31. And as the law got better satisfaction in the sufferings of Christ, "who became a curse for us," than in all the punishment we could endure, so it gets more satisfaction to the command by his obedience, than if our personal had been perfect. "Christ was made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4; and the Son's being made under the law, is of more worth than all our being under it. Now faith puts that obedience of God man in the law's hand; when we do God's will, he brings out Christ Jesus: "Lo," says he, "I come, I delight to do thy will," Psal. xl. 7, 8, 9. In a word, faith in Jesus accomplishes the law in the commands, in the promise, in the curse, as might be easily shewn, if your time would allow.

(1.) In the curse; because it lays hold upon Christ, "who was made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13, and so gives complete satisfaction to the Lord's justice in that point: it holds up the sacrifice and propitiation of our Saviour, and justice says, I am satisfied; it holds up the ransom," Job xxxiii. 24, and therefore Christ says, "Deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom. Again, we also observe, (2.) That faith in Christ also fulfils the commandments of the law; because it is the fountain of new obedience unto the law. It hath a respect unto all God's righteous judgments,—it purifies the heart into the obedience of them; and it works by love,

and so it is the end of the law for righteousness. It not only gives the answer of a good conscience unto all challenges and curses from Christ's blood; but daily derives virtue out of Jesus Christ, to bring forth fruit unto God. What it cannot reach by doing, it supplies by believing, and laying hold upon Christ's obedience; and this is the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us. Let us also, 3. Look upon the promise of life; and it is accomplished also by faith in Christ; for the law could not have given life, and so the promise would now be in vain: but Christ by faith justifies the sinner, and he lives, yea, hath eternal life in him, and so all the three are strengthened and established. Faith is the most comprehensive commandment, 1 John iii. 22, 23. It is put for all the commandments, (1.) By acknowledgment of the breach of all, and so it magnifies the law, and makes it honourable; and subscribes to the sentence of justice and the authority of the command. (2.) By satisfaction; because it gives a price for the breach of it, and puts the Cautioner in the craver's hand. (3.) By obedience; because, after this it hath a respect to all God's laws, and endeavours after new obedience to every one of them.

The improvement of all this is extremely plain: it may, *first*, Serve to discover unto us how we disappoint God of his end in giving unto us the command; and the law was given for the best purposes. But, 1. The most part of men have no end, no use of the law. God hath given it for some end, but they know it not: they live without God, and without rule in the world. Men walk as if there was no law nor command, no curse. There are but two ends the command was ordained for; the first instituted end which it naturally tends unto is life, Rom. vii. 10; and the second end for which God hath appointed it, (since the first is missed), is to pursue men to Jesus Christ, and convince them of sin, to make them once die that they may live, Rom. vii. 9. But the most part know neither of these ends. A carnal profane generation will not seek life by the righteousness of the law; "their

iniquities testify against them even to their face, and their sin is found hateful." There is not so much as an endeavour among too many Christian professors, either to approve themselves unto men, or their own consciences, in their outward walking; they walk without any regard of a command or rule, as it were by guess; their own rule is what pleases them best; what suits their humours, and crosses God's word, that they will do: as if they knew not the curse, or were not afraid of the sentence of condemnation. They walk in peace, and have no changes; they walk in the imagination of their vain hearts. They cannot say, and none will say for them, they seek life by the law, their contempt of it is so palpable; and yet no other end of it they know, so it is to them as if God had never appointed it. Again,

2. There are many wrong and false ends, or uses of the law, when we make it the immediate mean to life and righteousness, and seek justification by it; and this was the end that these false teachers would have made it; this is the end that the Israelites looked to: "all that the Lord hath commanded, will we do." O that was a great undertaking! poor men, they knew not what they said; they thought upon no other thing but obedience to the command, and so made it a covenant of works. Thus did the people that followed Christ, John vi. 28; and the young man that came to Christ said, "What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Here doing preferred to living by faith, Rom. x. 1—23; the Jews did so, and missed the right way. And few of you will take with this, that ye seek to be justified by your own works; and yet it is natural to men,—they will not submit to God's righteousness: there is need of submission to take Christ. O would not any think all the world would be glad of him, and come out and meet him bringing salvation? Would not dyvours [*i. e.* bankrupts] and prisoners be content of a deliverance? Were it any point of self-denial for a lost man, to grip a cord cast unto him? Yet here must there be submission to quit your own righteousness. It were of

great moment to convince you of this, that ye are all naturally standing to the terms of a covenant of works; ye who are yet alive, and the commandment hath not slain you, with Paul, Rom. vii. 9, 10. Ye are yet seeking life by the law, if ye have not applied the curse unto yourselves; after application of yourselves to the command, ye are yet seeking life by it. Ye adorn yourselves with some external privileges, in some external duties of religion, some branches of the second table duties, and come to God with these. Some think to satisfy God for their faults, with an amendment in time to come. Some think God cannot punish some faults in them, because they have some good things in them. Ask many men the ground of their confidence; and in all the world they know not how to be saved, unless their prayers do it, or their keeping the kirk. But this is not the end that God hath sent out the law for; ye cannot now stand to such a bargain: the law is now weak through the flesh, and it is now impossible for it to give life. Though you would pray never so much, all is but abomination. And would not many of you think ye were in a fair venture for heaven, if no man living could lay any thing to your charge, but were unblameable in all the duties of the first and second table? That you know nothing as by yourselves, that you were frequent and fervent in prayer, reading, and meditation; and as far advanced as Paul, or David, or Moses, or Job, sure ye would think yourselves out of doubt of heaven: nay, but in this ye may see ye are seeking righteousness by the law. Though ye were so far advanced, yet God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," would look to your sins, and pass by your righteousness, and all that would be as menstruous rags before him; and therefore, Paul was much wiser, who said, "though I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified."

3. Many make the law an end, when God hath only made it a mean. God hath appointed the law for some other use; namely, to be subservient to Christ and the gospel. But oftentimes we make the law the

end of all God's speaking to us, and so conclude desperate resolutions from it,—Rom. vii. 10, "When the law came, sin revived, and I died." Here the man is slain by the commandment, and not yet come to the healing Physician at Gilead. We use to gather desperation of the command, when it presses so perfect and exact obedience, such as we cannot yield; when it craves the whole sum, without the abatement of a farthing. We sit down under the sense of an impossibility to obey, and will not so much as mint [*i. e.* endeavour] at obedience; because we cannot do as we ought, we will not do as we can; because we cannot do in ourselves, we conclude nothing can be done at all. This is to make the command the last word, and the end of God's speaking. Doth not the child of God frequently sit down and droop over his duty, while he looks upon the Egyptian taskmaster, the command, charging the wholè work and portion of brick, and giving no straw to work upon? So are many in duties; while the aim and eye is upon some measure according to the perfect rule, the hands fall down feeble, and none is wrought at all, and does not look if there be another word from God posterior to the command, a word of promise. We use also to gather desperate conclusions of the curse, and make the law according to which we examine ourselves the end of God's manifesting his mind unto us, and doth not look upon it as a way leading to some other thing. When ye have tried yourselves, and applied your own ways and state unto the perfect rule, God's verdict of all men's condition is true in you, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; there is none righteous, no, not one;" and so is necessitated to apply the dreadful sentence of the judgment to yourselves. Ye stay there, and sit down to lodge with the sentence of condemnation, as if that were God's last word to sinners. Is not this to make the law the end, which is but appointed for another end? The curse is not irrepealable; why, then, do ye pass peremptory conclusions, as if there was no more hope, but it were perished from the Lord?

Use 2. To discover unto us the right end and use of the law, the great design and purpose of God in making such a glorious promulgation of the law on mount Sinai, and delivering it by the ministry of angels, in the hands of a mediator; the end which God hath been driving at these six thousand years, is this only,—that men may come to Jesus Christ and believe in him; the end wherefore the covenant of works hath been preached since Adam's fall, is only this,—to make way for a better covenant of grace, that men may hearken to the offer of it. Now faith in Jesus Christ hath two special actings, either upon Christ for justification of the person and eternal life and salvation; or for sanctification of the person and actions, in the fruits of new obedience. And in the text, unfeigned faith is described from both these, and gives the answer of a good conscience, that is of absolution from the curse, by the blood of Jesus, and makes him as quiet as he had never sinned, and then it purifies the heart, and worketh by love.

Now the law is a mean appointed of God, and instituted to lead to both these, and Christ in these.

4. The law is appointed to lead a man to faith in Christ, for salvation and righteousness; and the suitableness of it to that end we comprehend thus,—(1.) It convinces of sin; "the law entered that the offence might abound, and was added because of transgressions," Rom. v. 20; Gal. iii. 24. This is the end of God's sending the trumpet, and declaring our duty, "that every mouth may be stopped before God," and that none may plead innocence before his tribunal. While men are without the law, they are alive, and think well of themselves; but the entering of the commandment in a man's conscience, in the length, breadth, and spirituality of it, makes sin to appear exceeding sinful. Sin was in the house before, but was not seen before; and now, when the bright beam of a clear, spiritual, holy law, carrying God's authority upon it, is darted into the dark soul, O what ugly sights appear! The house is full of motes; ye cannot turn the command where it will

not discover innumerable iniquities, an universal leprosy; for all the actions that were called honest, civil, and religious before, get a new name, and they being seen in God's light, are called rottenness, "and living without the law," Rom. vii. 9, &c. Think ye, but the woman of Samaria knew her adultery, before Christ spake to her; nay, but Christ speaks according to the law, and makes it a mean of faith, "He tells her all that ever she did." He tells her indeed what she knew before, but in another manner. Men know the actions, but the Lord discovers the sinfulness of them, as offensive to God's holy majesty, and pure eyes; it will force a man to give his sin the right name, it will take away all excuses and shifts, and aggravate sin, that it may become exceeding sinful. But further, (2.) This is not the last end of it; not only is it ordained to stop all mouths, but to make all flesh guilty before God, "for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified," Rom. iii. 18, 19. It convinces of an impossibility to stand before God, and so it kills a man; and now the man asks, "what shall I do to be saved?" He cannot stand before God in terms of justice, where none can stand, and so either must some other delivery come, or he is gone. Now here he is put from making satisfaction, "who can abide with everlasting burnings?" He sees himself standing under the stroke of justice; and where can he go from God's presence? If he go to heaven, he is there; if to hell, he will find him out—the light and darkness are alike to him, Psal. cxxxix. 7—11. Not only the cries of sinful men, but, "O wretched and miserable man!" are heard from him. Now these are the steps the law proceeds by; but it must not stay there, or else it is not come to the end of it; it must put a man within the doors of the covenant of grace. The law is a messenger sent to pursue a man out of his own house of self-confidence and security he was like to perish in, and not to know it. Now by discovering his sinful and cursed condition, it brings him out of himself, and out of all created things; but the end is not yet attained, till it put him

in Christ's hand, and enter him in the border of the city of refuge. And this is the end of the abounding of sin by the law,—that grace may superabound, Rom. v. 20. And this is the end of the concluding him under sin, and making him guilty before God,—that the promise of faith may be given him, and another righteousness revealed by faith, Rom. iii. 20, 21; Gal. iii. 23. And now he is at peace, being justified by faith, and rests as a stone in its own place, Rom. v. 1, 2; and the law hath nothing to do with him, he is out of its jurisdiction. (3.) Now, when it hath pursued him unto Christ for salvation, yet the command is still useful, and appointed yet for faith in Jesus in performing new obedience. The Christian's daily walking is but the turning of the old round, as the sun doth this day go about the compass it did the first day; so his life is but a new conversion still. When he is now settled on Jesus for salvation, he must yet be put by the command. It discovers his daily sins, and so he is put to Jesus, the open Fountain for all sin and uncleanness; and the command comes out in perfection, and discovers his shortcoming and inability, and therefore he is put to Jesus for strength. And this is the end of the perfect rule upon believers,—that they, comparing duty with their ability, may be forced to make up their inability for duty by faith in Christ.

Use 3. We may know from this, what great encouragement we have to believe, and how great warrant, since not only God commands faith itself, 1 John iii. 23, but he hath appointed faith to be the end of all other commands, and hath given the whole law for this end, "For without faith it is impossible to please God;" faith is that which God loves best in all obedience. What is it that makes faith so precious? Certainly not the act itself, but the precious object of it, Jesus Christ, in whom the Father is well-pleased. Faith glorifies God in his justice, and mercy most, and abases the creature. Now what an obligation lies on us to believe! It is usual to question a right and warrant of faith, when we have no doubt of

other commands; but in all reason, a command might be questioned before faith. There is no duty admits of less disputing. Hath not God put it out of all controversy? What warrant have ye to pray, or to sanctify the sabbath? Is it not because God commands these duties? and do ye not go about them in obedience to God, notwithstanding of the sense of your own inability? How comes it, then, that ye make any more scruple of this? Hath not the same authority that gave the ten commands, given also this new command? And shall not disobedience be rebellion, and worse than witchcraft? But when, besides all this, it is the appointed end of all the commands, so that ye may say, it is commanded in all the commands, and the whole law; command and curse is a virtual kind of commanding faith, then what shall disobedience be? When ye break one command, ye are guilty of all; much more here, not only because of God's authority stamped upon all, but because it is the common end of all. If ye could once come to believe that ye had as good warrant to believe in Christ, as to abstain from cursing God's name, and as great obligation, what could ye answer for disobedience?

Use 4. This is a point of great consolation also. What more terrible than the law? Nothing in all the world. Nothing in all the word so dreadful as the trumpet on Sinai, sounding louder and louder: the judge and law gives voice; yet if ye could look to the end of it, and if the vail that was on the Jews' heart be not upon yours, O how comfortable shall it be! Doth not a command and curse form a dead sound in an awakened man's ears, and strike unto his heart like a knife? But if he knew this it would be a healing medicine. Would not many sinners wish there was no such thing in the Bible as a condemning law, when they came to get it escaped? But look to the end of it, and see gospel saving doctrine in the very promulgation of it. When it was published, it made the Jews all to tremble and cry out, and even holy Moses himself was afraid; but there is more consolation than terror here:

this condemning law is delivered in a Mediator's hand, even Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 19, 20. Who was he that spake out of the cloud and fire, and came and set down his throne on Sinai, accompanied with innumerable angels? Deut. xxxii. 2; Acts vii. 53. It was Jesus Christ that spoke to Moses in the mount, and in the bush also, Acts vii. 35, 38. Is it then the Mediator's law, whose office it is to preach glad tidings, and the day of salvation? Sure then, it needs be dreadful to no man; for if he wound, he shall heal, and he comes to bind up the broken-hearted. Ye may look on the command and curse as messengers sent by mercy, to prepare you, and make his way straight before his face. The end of the law is not to condemn you, to stop your mouth, and make you guilty,—it is not the last work it is appointed for; but the Mediator hath another end, to bring you to the righteousness of faith, to save you without yourselves. Therefore, ye may more willingly accept the challenge, since it comes in so peaceable terms. What should be terrible to you in all God's word and dispensation, since the ministry of condemnation and death is become the port of heaven and life? What must all his other dealings be? Surely there is nothing in the world, but it must lead to this end also. Prosperity and adversity, the end of them is faith, conviction, and challenges. Be not, then, as men without hope, when you are challenged, for the challenge comes from a Mediator, who would have you saved.

Use 5. You may see hence how injurious they are to grace who cry down the law. The Antinomian cannot be a right defender and pleader for faith, (the end of the command), when he opposes the command that leads to that end; he cannot exalt Christ aright, or lead men to him, when he will not come under the pedagogue's hand to be led to Christ. The law, even as a covenant of works, is of perpetual use to a believer, because it lays a blessed necessity upon him to abide with Christ. It is a guard put before the door, to keep him, as it was a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ; and makes a man subor-

dinate to the gospel as a mean to the end, and so it ought to be used. So then it is against the truth, that the Israelites were under the law, and not Christians. The law came not to be a mean of life and righteousness unto them, but "that the offence might abound, that so grace might superabound." The law was not intended, but Christ was intended; and this end they could not fix their eyes upon, by reason of the hardness of their hearts. (2.) It is also false, that Christian believers are wholly exeemed from the command and law. No, he hath use of all that leads to Jesus Christ; and the law itself becomes gospel under that notion. The command stands in its integrity, that he may be convinced of short-coming and inability, and so may believe in Christ; the curse also stands, and condemns him for new sins, that he may believe in Christ, who justifies the ungodly. Again, it is not truth, that the law is no mean of conversion, though not in its own virtue and power, but as it is delivered in a Mediator's hand, and applied by the Spirit of grace and the gospel.

Use 6. We exhort you not to disappoint God of his end; and if he hath given the law for this end, never rest till ye be at the end. Let the law enter into you once, or enter ye into it: ye cannot come to Jesus unless it lead you; let it enter into your consciences, with God's power and authority as his law, and examine yourselves by it, else ye shall never believe in Christ. (2.) Accept all the challenges of the law; let it enter till your mouth be stopped; read your obligation well, that ye may see how much ye owe. (3.) Let faith be the issue and result of all the applications of the law to yourselves; ye go in the law's hand to Christ, and sit not down with it, or else you will not go free till ye have paid the last farthing. Make faith in Christ the end of the curse condemning you, that he may absolve you, the end of the command commanding, that he may give strength and fulfil in you the righteousness of the law: God never sent a condition to you, but that you may believe, and be established. (4.) Let it be your exercise to travel between an impossible com-

mand and Christ Jesus, by faith, through whom all things are possible. Write always down how much ye owe, that ye may see grace superabounding; sit not down to examine the duty, or go not about it in your own strength. Be not discouraged though ye find no strength,—ye are called in such a case to believe; nay, in a word, what is all the Christian's employment? Faith exhausts it all. Look on the command, and it calls for believing; look upon the curse, and it calls also for believing.

XII.

1 Tim. i. 5.—Now the end of the commandment is love, &c.

We come now, as was proposed, to observe, *Secondly*, That faith unfeigned is the only thing which gives the answer of a good conscience towards God. Conscience in general, is nothing else but a practical knowledge of the rule a man should walk by, and of himself in reference to that rule. It is the laying down a man's state, and condition, and actions, beside the rule of God's word, or the principles of nature's light. It is the chief piece of a man,—the man is as his conscience is. It is a man's lord, as a wing to a bird; or as a rudder is to a ship, so is conscience to a man in all his ways. The office of conscience is ordinarily comprehended in three styles it gets—It is a law or rule; a witness and a judge, or a light, a register, and a recorder; and an executioner: for the conscience, its first act is some principle of nature's light, obliging it as a rule to walk by, or some revealed truth of God, whereof the conscience is informed. Now the conscience, in the second place, comes to examine itself according to the rule, and there it bears witness of a man's actions or state, and faithfully records and depones, and at length the conscience pronounces the sentence upon the man, according as it has found him; either accusing or excusing, condemning or absolving. Now a good con-

science is diversely taken in Scripture, 1. A good conscience is an honest clean conscience, bearing testimony of integrity and uprightness in walking, such as Paul had, 2 Cor. i. 12, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world." Heb. xiii. 18, "We trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly." Acts xxiv. 16, "Herein do I exercise myself in having a conscience void of offence, towards God and man." 1 Pet. iii. 16, "Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." 2. A good conscience is a conscience calmed and quieted, that hath gotten an answer to all challenges, in the blood and resurrection of Jesus, 1 Pet. iii. 21. And this we take to be meant here; the good conscience is the conscience that is sprinkled with Christ's blood, "from dead works, to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. For the guilty man that comes to Christ, and washes in the fountain opened for sin, "hath no more conscience of sins," Heb. x. 2. And, therefore, it is called a pure and clean conscience, 2 Tim. i. 3, "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers, with a pure conscience," &c. The stain of guilt is taken away. Now, I say, faith only gives the answer of a good conscience. The man that comes to Christ hath an ill conscience, when he hath examined himself according to the law, and given out faithful witness of his own state, and condition, and accordingly pronounced sentence, the sentence condemned, as condemnatory; he finds himself lying under God's curse; and so the conscience from a judge turns a tormentor, and begins to anticipate hell, and prevent the execution of wrath. All the world cannot answer this challenge, or absolve from this sentence, until faith come and give a solid answer, that may be a ground of peace; and its answer is good and sure, because it dips the conscience in the blood of the Son of God. For the blood of bulls and of goats could not do it, the redemp-

tion of the soul was precious. Faith puts the soul over head and ears in the fountain opened, and it comes out like snow, or wool, though it were like scarlet or crimson. The law condemned, and the conscience subscribed itself sinful, and concluded itself lost in sin; but faith in Christ pleads before mercy's throne, where judgment and justice also sit: it pleads its cause over again, and gets the former sentence repealed. The conscience gave in the charge against the man, but faith sits down and writes the discharge; and so he is as free, as if all his debt was paid, or never contracted: faith puts the cautioner in the creditor's hand, and goes free. As the law writes down a charge of sin and curses, faith sets against it as many sufferings in Christ, as many blessings in the Blessing of all nations. And when the conscience that condemned itself, by faith again absolves itself, O what a calm, what a perfect peace is it then kept in! What a continual feast doth it enjoy! Prov. xv. 5. Make him never such a great man in the world, he would utterly despise it, and count himself more blessed in the pardon of sin, and the friendship of God, than all the enjoyments of this world. He is better in some respects than if he had never sinned, for his sin is as it were, not before God; and withal, he hath got not only acquittance from guilt, but acquaintance with Jesus Christ, the blessing of the nations, and the desire of all the families of the earth. Now may he triumph and boast in Christ Jesus, "Who shall condemn? It is God that justifies, it is Christ that died, and is risen again." He may say with David, "I will not fear, though my iniquities compass me about;" and with Job, "If he cause quietness, who can give trouble?" We observe then that,

1. Before a man come to Christ he has an ill conscience; for he is at peace with himself and absolves himself, saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the abominations of my heart," Deut. xxix. 19. He also says, "Because I am innocent, therefore God will turn away

his wrath," Jer. ii. 35. He cries, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," Ezek. xv. 10; and that is but a desperate condition, and a bad conscience, if any can be so called. This is the secure and seared conscience, that either doth not judge itself, because a man hath beaten it flint hard, or is constantly absolving itself upon false grounds; that is the conscience that in all the creation is nearest the desperate conscience, that shall never have a good answer: his sin is but lying at the door like Cain's, and shall enter in when judgment comes. He is but flattering himself in his own eyes, till his iniquity be found hateful, and till sudden destruction comes as an armed man. Look upon Deut. xxiii. 20, and see such a man's case; there is no peace for him,—the Lord will not pity, nor spare him, but pour upon him all the curses of the law, even when he blesses himself in his own eyes. In short, he is such as is awakened to see where he is, and condemns himself according to the word, and that is a better and a more hopeful conscience than the former, yet it is but an ill conscience; conscience doth act its part aright, and in so far it is good, but the man is but in a miserable condition. Withal, it gives such a wound to the soul, as none can bear it; all the sad affections which take up men's spirits come in; and this is the worm which never dies in hell, and the fire which shall never be quenched. Anger, grief, hatred, despair, always dwell with an ill conscience. This is both the resemblance of hell, and the sparks which come from that devouring fire. But, 2. When the troubled conscience, tossed up and down, and looking upon all hands for help, and all refuge failing them, and no person caring for their soul, when it gets once a look of Jesus, and roweth unto his shore, O what a change! he commands the winds to calm, and the waves to cease, and says unto him, "Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven." Faith finds in Jesus ample grounds of answering all challenges, of silencing all temptations, of overcoming all enemies, and commands

the soul to go into its place of refuge. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee," &c. Psal. cxvi. 7—9.

We shall now shut up all with the application in some uses. Use 1. We may learn hence, how few have a good conscience; faith is a rare thing, but a good conscience is much rarer. And here we may notice that the conscience which is dead and sleeping, is not a good conscience—every quiet and calm conscience is not a good one: ye may dream over your days with the foolish virgins, and take rest in a pleasing delusion, and cry, peace, peace, and yet the end of it will be worse than the beginning. A conscience that acts not at all, nor judges itself, is, as it were, no conscience; either ignorance hath blinded it, and keeps it in the dark, or wickedness hath stopped its mouth. You think your conscience good because it tells you few of your faults, it troubles you not; but that conscience must once speak, and do its office, it may be, in a worse time for you. (2) It is not a good conscience that always speaks good, and absolves the man: God may condemn, when it absolves; when ye walk according to false principles and grounds, and either take a wrong rule, or know not how to apply the rule to yourselves. Shall God approve of false judgment? your conscience is erring, and deludes you. But, (3.) The good conscience is not only a quiet conscience, but a quieted conscience: it not only hath peace, but peace after trouble. Ye, then, that have no peace, but what ye had all your days, it is but a mere fancy; the answer of a good conscience quiets the distempered mind: it comes by the sprinkling and washing of Christ's blood. He that hath peace on solid grounds with God, hath once taken up his enmity against him. 2. The good conscience hath been once an evil conscience, when it met with the command; the man has once been under the law, before he came to faith, and examined himself; and his conscience condemned him as not righteous, and out of Christ. Ye, then, that never examined your state, ac-

cording to the perfect and holy law, and never judged yourselves; ye cannot believe in Jesus, and so can have no good conscience. 3. The good conscience flows nearest from faith, answering the challenges of the law. Some have had sore distempers of conscience, and puddling exercises of terror, but how they were eased or quieted, they cannot tell; but their spring-tide ebbed, and they bubbled no more: it went away at will, and did wear out with time. This is not a good conscience that knows not distinctly the grounds of faith to oppose the law's condemnation. Some turn to build cities with Cain, and pass the time pleasantly, or in some business, that they may beguile their challenges; but this is not the conscience that faith makes good. Now set apart all those who do not examine themselves at all, nor judge themselves, but live in a golden dream; who have never been arraigned before God's tribunal, or summoned by his deputy to appear before his judgment-seat; and join unto these all persons, who, judging themselves, take other rules of absolution than the word gives; who, after trial, absolve themselves; and with all those who, condemning themselves, yet flee not unto this city of refuge, this blood of sprinkling, to get a solid answer in the word to all their challenges. And O how few are behind! It is but as the gleaning after the vintage. Nay, many believers have not a good conscience, though they have a right to it; because they settle not themselves on the grounds of faith, and go not on from faith to faith. There must be some sense of faith, before faith answer rightly, and give peace to the mind.

Use 2. Ye see the way to get a good conscience: believe much, and maintain your faith. It is as simple and poor a mistake as can befal a soul; ye think, because ye have not peace after your believing, therefore, it was not unfeigned and true faith; and therefore, ye will not believe, because ye cannot get peace. But believe, that ye may have a good conscience: would ye know your sins are pardoned before ye believe? How precious should

faith be unto you, when, by faith, ye may not only overcome the world; but, as it were, overcome God in judging, and the soul may be justified when it is judged? Ye will not get challenges answered by your own integrity and uprightness, or by your performing of duties; no, no, these cannot be sufficient grounds of your peace. Lay down the solid and satisfying grounds of faith of imputed righteousness, and of salvation by Jesus Christ, and this shall be a foundation of lasting peace. Sense makes not a good conscience: there is much lightness and vanity in it; and the rule it proceeds by is changeable, but faith establishes the soul, and makes it not ashamed.

XIII.

1 Tim. i. 5.—Now the end of the commandment is love, &c.

Thirdly, Faith purging the conscience purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9, and hope also purifies the heart, 1 John iii. 3, which is nothing else but faith in the perfection and vigour of it. This includes, 1. That the heart was unclean before faith. 2. That faith cleanses it, and makes it pure. "But who can say, I have made my heart pure," Prov. xx. 9; I am clean from my sin? Is there any man's heart on this side of time, which lodges not many strange guests? In answer to this we may observe, That there is a legal purity, and a gospel purity. A legal purity is a sincere and full conformity to God's holy will and command, in thought, affections, inclinations, and actions; and in this sense, who can say, I have made my hands clean? The old corruption sticks to the heart, and cannot be thoroughly scraped out; there are many lurking holes for uncleanness to lie hid in. Corruption is engrained in him, and it will not be the work of one day to change it: the whole head is sick, and the whole body full of sores; all the corners of the heart are full of filthiness and idols; and though the house be now sweeped

and garnished, and all things look better in it, yet there are many hidden places of rottenness undiscovered; and it is the soul's continual exercise to purify itself as he is pure. But evangelical purity and cleanness is that which God reconciled in Christ takes to be so, and that which in Christ is accepted; and is a fount of his clean Spirit dwelling in the heart. The heart formerly was a troubled fountain, that sent out filthy streams, as a puddle; corruption was the mud among the affections and thoughts; but now a pure heart is like a clear running water, clean and bright like crystal. Now this purity consists in the washing of regeneration, and sanctification by the Spirit of holiness. Jesus Christ came both by water and blood, 1 John v. 6: he came by blood to sprinkle and purge the conscience, that it might have no more conscience of sins, Heb. x. 2; ix. 14; and he also came by water, that is, the washing and cleansing virtue of the Spirit of grace, to purge and cleanse us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. There are two things in sin that Jesus came to destroy,—the guilt and offence of sin, whereby the sinner is bound over to condemnation, and lies under the Judge's curse; and the spot of sin, which also Christ came to destroy. He did both in his own person, and he is to perfect this in us personally, who were judicially reckoned one with him, Rom. vi. 3—12; 1 John iii. 5. Now Jesus Christ hath come with blood to sprinkle the conscience from dead works, and give it a good answer to the challenges of the law, and an ill conscience; and he hath come likewise with water to wash and cleanse us from the spots, and filth, and power of sin. The first removes the guilt, the latter removes the filth of sin, and both are done by faith, which is our victory over the world; and this is the way how faith overcomes the world by the water and blood, 1 John v. 4, 5, 6. The blood of Jesus Christ is holden by faith with a twofold virtue of cleansing, from the guilt, and from the filth of sin, and thus cleanses us from all unrighteousness, 1 John i. 7; according to the promise of the covenant, Ezek. xxxvi.

25, 26. The application of the blood of sprinkling hath two effects: one is for justification,—ye shall be clean; another is, "from all your filthiness and idols will I cleanse you," that is sanctification. (1.) Now this purity consists in this, that the pure heart regards not iniquity in the inward man, nor delights in sin, Psalm lxvi. 18. "He sets not up his idols in God's place," Ezek. xxxvi. 25. The cleansing of the heart is from idols, although he cannot get himself purified as Christ is pure; and though iniquity be in his heart, yet he regards it not; he looks not upon it as a guest approven and accepted. Sin may be an intruding guest, but sin is not welcomed with all his heart. He dare not take that pleasure in sin, that another man would do: He hath a worm that eats up his pleasure, when he departs from God, or his thoughts go a-whoring from him; the unbelieving man's heart is a house full of idols, but the entry of faith by God's Spirit makes their Dagon to fall. But, (2.) The pure heart hath much of the filthiness taken away that filled it before, and so it is denominated from the best part. It is washed and cleansed from a sea of corruption; and the body of sin that did reign within the heart was formerly like an impure fountain, that sent out nothing but rotten stinking waters. "Unto him were all things unclean, for his heart and conscience was defiled," Tit. i. 15. Nothing was pure to him, it ran continually in a stream of unclean thoughts and affections; but now he is purified, and to the believer "all things are pure:" the ordinary strain and current of his thoughts and affections run more clearly free of the earthly quality they had, more sublimated, more spiritualized, and he is named by that. Though it may be temptation may trouble the fountain, and make it run unclean and earthly, yet it will settle again, and come into its own posture, and the dregs fall to the bottom, and the clean water of the Spirit be the predominant; but a standing puddle will run foul, as long as it runs: corruption goes through all; it is not a corner of the heart, but the whole heart.

(3.) A pure heart is like a running fountain: if it be defiled, yet it is always casting out the filth, and is about returning to a right state; but an impure heart is like a standing puddle that keeps all it gets. If by temptation the pure heart and affections be stirred, and the filth that is in the bottom come up to the brim, it hath no rest nor peace in that condition, but works it out again; and it hath this advantage, that it is purer and clearer after troubling than it was before, for much of the filth would run out that had been lying quiet before: but an impure heart keeps all, and vents none; if ye trouble it, ye will raise an ill smell, and when it settles, it falls but to the bottom again, and there is as much to work upon the next time. In a word, the believer, when he sins, and his heart goes wrong, weeps over his heart, and has no peace till it be cleansed; he washes in the fountain of Christ's blood; when a natural transgression gets up, he sets himself against it, and the root of it both, and bears down the original corruption, which is the fountain of all sin, Psal. li. 5, and at every descent he brings away something of that puddle; he is upon the growing hand by the exercise of faith and repentance. Look upon him after he has seen, and been sensible of his sins, and ye would say it is not the man ye saw,—he hates sin more than he did formerly. We also notice,

(4.) That purity is sincerity and uprightness. James iv. 8, "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Hypocrisy is filthiness and abominable to God. He, then, is a sincere man, that hath any honesty of heart toward God: when his actions are not right, his heart doth not approve them, Rom. vii. When he cannot come up to his duty, his desire comes before performance. A sincere man hath a respect to all God's commandments.

(5.) The pure man is still purifying himself even as God is pure; as he who hath called him is holy, so he is holy in all manner of conversation. He never thinks he is clean enough, and so he aspires after greater purity, and is named a saint, rather from his aim and endeavour,

than from his attainment. He cries, Unclean, unclean am I; and holy, holy, Lord God, art thou! He hath taken up his lodging near the opened fountain, and dwells there, never to remove thence, till he have his robes clean and white in the blood of the Lamb. No unclean thing can enter into heaven; and he is trimming himself against that day, and setting apart all superfluity of naughtiness, and filthiness, and still all his righteousness is as menstruous rags; he is cleansing his house, every day casting out something, searching out all the corners of it, lest the unclean thing, and the Babylonish garment be hid: his pattern is to walk even as Christ walked, 1 John ii. 6.

Now faith and a good conscience have influence on this purifying the heart; 1. Because faith lays hold upon the cleansing virtue of Christ's blood; it applies Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, and his blood purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. The blood that was offered up by the eternal Spirit, of how great virtue must it be, when applied to the heart and conscience! Heb. ix. 14. No wonder it make that like wool which was formerly like scarlet. Now, faith in Jesus Christ applies that blood; it is the very hand that sprinkles it. Faith takes up house beside the opened fountain, and dwells there. Faith takes Jesus for sanctification, as well as justification, 1 Cor. i. 30. Faith looks upon a judicial union with Christ crucified, and sees his perfect offering once offered to sanctify all, and therefore, makes continual applications with David, "purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow." 2. Faith purifies the heart, because it lays hold on the promises, and makes use of the word, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Faith, having such promises, cleanses the man from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. The proper object of faith is the word, and the word is the truth by which we are sanctified and made clean, John xvii. 17. There are many precious promises of sanctification and holiness, and faith draws the virtue of purifying the heart out of the

promises, and applies the promise to his impure heart, and it is purged. 3. Faith purifies the heart also by provocation and up-stirring, in as far as it gives the answer of a good conscience; for the man who hath gotten a solid answer to all his objections in Christ's blood, and hath the continual feast of joy and peace in believing, O how will he abhor himself, and repent in dust and in ashes! Faith takes up God's holiness and purity, and loathes itself with Job, and cries, Unclean! The believer will thus reason and conclude, Shall I any more delight and live in sin, since I am dead unto it by Jesus Christ? Rom. vi. 1, 2. He falls in with the beauties of holiness, and so cannot abide his own. Faith begets hope, and hope purifies the heart. Shall, then, the man who expects to see God, and be a citizen of the new Jerusalem, where no unclean thing can enter, shall he walk in his former lusts, like the wicked world, and not make himself ready for the continuing city he goes to, and adorn himself for the company of the blessed God and angels?

Let us now conclude, by applying all which hath been said in some uses. *Use.* 1. We may see from what hath been hinted, how little faith is among you; faith purifies the heart, but if ye examine yourselves, your hearts will be found unclean, and such as the Holy Ghost cannot dwell in. The temple in which God's holy Spirit resides must touch no unclean thing, 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17. Are not many men's corruptions rank and lively? Unclean hands are an infallible demonstration of an unclean heart, James iv. 8. Those things which proceed out of the heart, may teach you what is within the heart; the streams may let you know what is in the fountain, Mark vii. 15—22. James iii. 11, 12. What need ye any more proof of yourselves? Sinners, look to your hands, and your outward man, and learn from them to know your hearts: These things proceed out of the heart and defile the whole man. The profanity of the most part of men's practices, cursing and swearing, &c. is a bitter stream that cannot proceed from a good fountain. It is a wonder how the

world satisfy themselves with a dream of faith. What influence hath your faith had upon your heart and conversation? Are ye not as earthly and worldly as ever, as unclean as ever? Ye think your hearts good, but if your conversation be not good, your hearts are not good. Will any person think his sins are pardoned, when he wallows in them? Do they believe they shall obtain the remission of those sins they are not purging themselves from? No, no; the blood and water must go together, and the Spirit's sanctifying, with Christ's justifying.

Use 2. The children of God may hence gather the ground and reason of their little progress in sanctification. Why are your hearts so unclean, and why is there so much corruption yet living in your thoughts and affections, that it cannot keep within the heart, but, as a full fountain, must run out in streams of external actions? It is even this,—ye do not believe much; and though this be told you, yet ye will not believe it; ye take ways of your own to purge out your corruptions, and it will not do; all your resolutions, prayers, sad experiences, &c. are of no more virtue than the blood of bulls and goats. Ye must then apply the blood of the Son of God, which was offered up by the eternal Spirit. It is but a poor fancy to suspend believing, till ye see a pure heart. How shall ye get a pure heart? Is it not folly to forbear planting till ye see fruits, or to pluck up your tree because it bears not the first day? Abide in Christ, and ye shall bring forth much fruit; believe, and believe, and believe again, till faith be answered by a good conscience, till that sweet echo be given unto the Lord's comforting voice, "thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." Be much in laying hold upon the precious promises, and then your heart shall fall out of love with this present evil world, and shall relish spiritual things; but who will believe this report? Ye go away convinced that this is the only way to purify yourselves, and yet ye continue puddling in your old way. May God persuade your hearts to do better.

XIV.

1 Tim. i. 5.—Now the end of the commandment is love, &c.

Fourthly, Faith purging the conscience, and purifying the heart, "works by love:" love is the fruit of faith; love is the stream that flows out of a pure heart and a good conscience. By love we mean principally love to God, or Jesus Christ, and then love to the saints next to our Saviour. This is often mentioned in scripture, "hope maketh not ashamed, Rom. v. 5; because the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost." This love is the consequent of the peace which a justified man obtains by faith, Rom. v. 1, 2; 2 Cor. v. 12. The constraining love of Christ flows from this ground, that a man judges Christ to have died for him, from faith's taking up of Christ in that noble expression of his love, John v. 40, 42, "And ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life. I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." Faith works by love: love is faith's hand put out in action for Christ; and as the mind commands the outward man, whether it will or not, so doth faith command love, Eph. iii. 17. The rooting and building up in love is a fruit of Christ's dwelling in the heart by faith; love is the branch that grows in faith's root; these are often joined together, and comprehend the substance of the law and gospel, 1 Tim. i. 14; 2 Tim. i. 13. Faith fulfils the obedience to the gospel, and love is the fulfilling of the whole law, Rom. xiii. 10; so that faith leads a man back again to the command, that he fled to faith from,—faith hath reconciled them and taken up the difference. We shall then shew how faith and a good conscience, and a pure heart contributes to love.

First, Faith is the eye and sense of the soul to take up Jesus Christ; nothing is loved but as it is known and apprehended to be good. The affections of themselves are blind, and cannot go forth but as led by the direction of

faith; faith is the mind to present love's object. The world sees no beauty nor form in the commands, that they should desire them; even Jesus Christ himself is but foolishness to a natural mind; he neither knows his need of him, nor Christ's suitableness to his need; but faith is the first opening of the eyes, when we are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. Christ becomes the believer's wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. "The day spring from on high visits them who sit in darkness, to guide their feet in the way of peace," Luke i. 78, 79. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of the Sun of righteousness, doth arise and shine into their hearts." The man sees himself in a dangerous condition, and says, Oh! where am I? And faith discovers, on the other hand, all things in Christ Jesus suitable to such a case. They see nothing but vanity, emptiness and misery, sin and condemnation in the creature: they see grace, mercy, holiness, righteousness, and free salvation in Christ. Set these beside one another, and judge ye if the soul cannot choose to run out in affection and longing desire. Oh, says he, to be one with him; faith presents all the motives and attractives of the heart, and then there needs no more to make it love. Faith discovers a man's self unto himself, and lets him see all misery within, complete woe within doors, and it holds forth bread without the ports [*i. e.* gates] for the faint, and salvation for the lost; it brings in an amiable person, who is fairer than the children of men, who is all love, and hath no spot in him. Is it not a sweet word, a Redeemer to captives, a Saviour to sinners; and will not the soul rise up, and go forth out of itself? And will it not choose to flit [*i. e.* remove] unto him who is the desire of all nations? Will it not go unto him for food and clothing? Love, then, is the soul's journey and motion towards Jesus, whom faith hath brought in such a good report of.

Secondly, But when faith hath given the answer of a good conscience, and brought Jesus nearer hand to the

soul, or the soul nearer unto him, then love is stronger, and grows like a fire that many waters cannot quench; it is like jealousy, that is cruel as the grave,—many floods cannot drown it. Union is the ground of love; union in nature, or sympathy, or likeness, is the ground of affection: accordingly, as faith brings Christ nearer to the heart, the flame increases. All things are desired and loved as good, but more desired, as not only good in themselves, but good unto us. Gold in the Indies will not much move the heart, but bring it hither and ye shall see who loves it. The first act of faith puts a man in great need of a Saviour, and discovers a possibility of redemption through Jesus, and in so far he is loved; but when once faith has gone that length as to make a good conscience, and to calm and silence the woes of a troubled mind, by the actual application of that desired possible redemption, and when it can particularly apply the common salvation, O then what burning affection! "Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and passes by the transgression of his heritage, because he delights in mercy? Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. I will love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice; I will call upon him so long as I live;" as if it had never loved before. They will love much, to whom much is forgiven. Love without such a faith, is full of jealousies and suspicions; but when faith hath brought in Christ to dwell in the heart, then it is rooted and built up in love, Eph. iii. 17, and then perfect love casts out fear, 1 John iv. 17. Love before such an assurance is but a tormenting love, and hath much fear in it, saying, Oh, I may want him, and then I will be more miserable than if I had not known him; but faith giving the answer of a good conscience, casts out horror and fear, and then perfects love, and the soul then closes with Christ as a Mediator and friend, and closes with God as a merciful Father, now reconciled unto him through Christ, and not any more as a stern or severe Judge. But,

Thirdly, When faith hath purified the heart, and cleansed the affections, then the soul burns with a purer flame of affection and zeal to God, and is, as it were, delivered from the earthly weight put upon it. When the heart is purified, love is like the flame, whereas if he be not so purged, there may be some heat and fire latent in the ashes covered with corruption: But a pure heart is a spiritual heart, and minds spiritual things, Col. iii. 1, and it is a heart going back unto its own place; Christ hath touched it with his own heart, and with his salvation, and it looks aye sure to him in the heavens. The love of the world is inconsistent with the love of the Father, 1 John ii. 15. The love of the world plucks the heart downward, and the lusts of the flesh are so many weights upon the believer, that he cannot mount up in a spiritual cloud of divine affection to Jesus Christ; but the pure and spiritual heart is now more refined, and delivered from these impediments, and it is like a pure lamp of oil burning upward. When a man's heart is engaged to any thing of this world, love cannot be perfect, for love is a man's master, and "no man can serve two masters."

XV.

Matt. vi. 33.—But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, &c.

This is a part of Christ's long sermon. He is dissuading his disciples and the people from carnal carefulness, and worldly-mindedness. The sermon holds out the Christian's diverse aspects towards spiritual and external things, what is the Christian's disposition in regard to the world, how he should look upon food, raiment, and all things necessary in this life,—"Be careful for nothing, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or drink," &c.; seek them not as your chief good;—but what is his disposition towards spiritual and eternal things, and how

ye ought to look upon them, seek them, set your heart upon them, look upon them as your treasure, and "where your treasure is, let your heart be there also." So, then, you see here two callings and employments of a man in the world, two universal callings that comprehend all men, one natural to us, and unlawful; the other divine, and lawful; the one paganish, the other Christian. What is the employment of all men out of Christ? There are many different callings and employments among men; one spends his time and thoughts one way, and another, another way, but all of them agree in one general,—whatever they are, their heart is here, the thoughts they have are bounded and circumscribed in this present world, they are careful for nothing else, but what concerns their back and belly, or their name and credit. Take the best of them, whose employment seems most abstracted from the common affairs and distractions among men, yet their affections run no higher than this present world. On the other hand, what should be the exercise and employment of a Christian? It is even this,—whatever he be, or whatever his occupation be among men, he drives a higher trade with heaven, that should take him up; the world gets but his spare hours, he is upon a more noble and high project, he aspires after a kingdom, his heart is above where Christ is, and where his treasure is, and these things exhaust his affections and pains. Christ Jesus once takes the man's heart off these baser things, that are not worthy of an immortal spirit, let be a spirit who is a partaker of a divine nature; but because the creature cannot be satisfied within itself, its happiness depends upon something without itself, (and this speaks out the vanity of the creature, and something of God, that is peculiar to him to be self-sufficient), therefore Christ changes the object of the heart, and fixes the spirit upon a nobler and divine exercise. Since the spirit of a man cannot abide within doors without starving, it must run out upon something; therefore, Jesus Christ hath described its bounds and way, its end and period. Before, a man sought many

things, because not one satisfying, that the want of one might be supplied by another, and therefore he was never near the borders of contentment and happiness, because still a thousand things are wanting; but now Christ puts the soul upon a satisfying and self-sufficient object, and here the streams of affection may run in one current, and need not divide or go contrary ways.

First, We have here then, the Christian's calling and employment in this world, opposed to the carefulness and worldly-mindedness of the men of this world, "seek ye the kingdom of God." *Secondly*, His encouragement and success in two things,—one is expressed, the other implied. That which is expressed, is seeking the kingdom of God, of grace and glory;—if ye seek this kingdom, all temporal things shall be laid to your hand, "all these things" that ye need "shall be added unto you:" the other imported, —ye shall get the kingdom who seek it; for the words "added to you," suppose the first and principal intent to be gotten. Then the Christian's success and encouragement is this—ye shall have the thing ye seek and more also. It was said to Solomon, "Because thou hast sought wisdom, therefore thou shalt get all other things." Because, O Christian, thou soughtest the kingdom of God, and not this present world, which Satan is prince of, therefore, thou shalt get according to thy word, and thou shalt also get what thou askedst not, 1 Kings iii. 11, 12, 13. He hath success in the main business, and there is a superplus, besides some accession to his portion that comes of will, so to speak. The kingdom of God in the New Testament is sometimes restricted to the elect, the word of the gospel, and the administration of it by the Spirit of grace in the hearts of his people. This is frequently called the kingdom of heaven, and of God, Matt. xiii. 33. Sometimes the kingdom of God is taken for the state of grace, a new principle of spiritual life, that grows up to the perfect day, and this kingdom "is within us," Luke xvii. 21. It is taken also for heaven the kingdom of glory, Luke xxii. 16; both these must be sought after,

Luke xii. 31, and received, Luke xviii. 17; and must suffer violence, Matt. xi. 12; the righteousness thereof may be taken for the righteousness of God by faith, Rom. x. 3; iii. 21, 22; 2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. iv. 11, 13; ix. 30; x. 6; Heb. xi. 7; Phil. iii. 9.

We would observe here, 1. That the Christian, his name, and occupation, is to be a wanter and a seeker. 2. The great exercise and employment he should have in this world, that which should swallow up his affections, thoughts, and endeavours, should be the kingdom of God and his righteousness, which is clearly expressed in three things, (1.) His first and chief care should be to be at peace with God, and to be adorned with Christ's righteousness. (2.) To have the kingdom of God within him, a throne of judgment erected for Christ to rule the whole man by his Spirit according to the word. (3.) To be made an heir here, and a possessor hereafter, of the everlasting kingdom of glory. (4.) No man can either be a subject of God's gracious kingdom here, or his glorious kingdom hereafter, without the imputed righteousness of the Son of God, and whoever seeks righteousness must also seek the kingdom of God. These are joined together, and there is a great opposition between seeking of the world, and seeking grace and glory; whoever is careful in these things cannot be diligent here. But rather seek the kingdom of God, Luke xii. 31. It also implies (5.) That whatever a man or his profession be, except he seek this way of righteousness, and yield himself into God's kingdom of grace, and unless Christ rule in him, he is but a pagan or infidel Gentile in God's account. We return to the first of these, namely,

First, That the Christian is a seeker. This is the ordinary description of a child of God, Psal. xxiv. 6; Psal. xxvii. 8. Many at this time call themselves seekers; they profess they seek a true church, and seek ordinances purely dispensed, but find none; but the child of God, the good Christian that seeks according to Christ's appointment, seeks not these things as if they were not, but

he seeks God in ordinances, he seeks Christ in the church, he seeks grace and glory, honour and immortality, and eternal life. He is in the church, he hath the ordinances rightly administered, yet he wants the most part till he find Jesus Christ in all these. Many seek corn, wine, or any worldly good thing, saying, "Who will shew us any good?" Fie upon such a lax and indifferent spirit, that hath no discretion or sense of things that are good, that sees not one thing needful, and no more good than is necessary. But the child of God is a seeker different from these also, he seeks the favour and countenance of God, Psal. iv. 6, 7. He seeks wisdom above all things, Prov. ii. 4. He seeks but one good thing, because there is but one good thing necessary. *Secondly*, The seeking Christian is a wanter, one that hath nothing and finds it so; he wants and knows he wants, else he would never seek. What wants he? nay, rather ask, What hath he? It may soon be told what he hath, but it is hard to tell what he wants. Look what he hath, and ye find little or nothing; and therefore ye may conclude he wants all things. The text tells what he wants: 1. He wants righteousness. 2. He wants grace. 3. He wants glory, or hath no right to it. Men seek not what they carry from the womb, therefore all men have come into the world with three great wants. (1.) Ye want righteousness, ye cannot stand before God in the terms of strict justice, there is nothing ye have or can do, but it is "a menstruous cloth," Isa. lxiv. 6. All your religion and prayers will never commend you to God's holy justice; the Scripture hath passed this sentence upon you all, "There is none righteous, no, not one," Rom. iii. 10. The righteousness that the law of God requires is perfect and complete, and exact. You must either lay down the whole sum, or, if it want a farthing, it is no payment. Keep all the nine commands, but if ye break the tenth, these nine will not suffice. Now all of you have sinned and corrupted your ways, and it is impossible to make up the want; as the redemption of the soul is precious and ceases for ever, so the broken and dyvour man having become a bank-

rupt, shall never make up or pay his debt to all eternity : He hath once broken the command, and all your keeping afterwards, will not stand for the obedience ye should always have given to it. Therefore, sinners of the posterity of Adam, and wretched men by nature, see this great want and impossibility to recover it in yourselves. (2.) Ye likewise want all grace by nature. There is no delusion more ordinary than this, that the world thinks grace is very common ; but believe it, sirs, that all men came from the womb without grace, get it as ye will. Look what the Scripture speaks of the whole race of Adam, "There is no fear of God before their eyes," Rom iii. 18. "They are without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world, aliens from the covenant of promise," Eph. ii 1, 2, 3, 12. Let grace be as common as can be, yet all of you once wanted it. Ye have it not by birth, nor by education, nor by baptism ; ye think perhaps a baptized soul cannot be graceless, but know it for a truth that ye have neither legal righteousness, nor evangelical holiness: all of you have wofully fallen from righteousness, and therefore ye lie with Adam's posterity without hopein the world. Grace and truth must come from above by Jesus Christ ; grace and glory are the gifts of God. (3.) The sinner also comes short of the glory of God, Rom. iii. 23 ; all sinners are born heirs of hell and wrath, without the hope of happiness. There is none born with a title to the kingdom of heaven or any right to it. Man in his fall lost his right to eternal life and immortality, and hath purchased a doleful right to the Lord's wrath and to hell-fire. Ye think it strange that any christened or baptized person should be damned, but the Scripture knows no difference, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature, and faith which worketh by love ;" neither to be a member of the visible church, nor a pagan, avails any thing, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Now, what have ye since ye want righteousness? ye want grace, and ye want glory, and in the place of these ye have unrighteous-

ness, all sin, all God's curses and wrath, and this makes up complete misery. In a word, ye want God and Christ, and this is all, and enough for all, Eph. ii. 12. Ye have by nature more sibness [*i. e.* kindred] with Satan, and nearer relation to him, than to God; and if ye want God, what can ye have beside? Your abundance is want, as "all things are theirs who are Christ's," so nothing is theirs who are not God's. In short, there is not in all the creation such a miserable creature as man, whom God had magnified and exalted above the angels, and the rest of the works of his hands. Now, all men want these, but no man knows this but the Christian, whose eyes Christ hath opened, and to whom he hath given eye-salve. Laodicea was blind and saw not, but she thought she was rich enough, when she had nothing, Rev. iii. 17, 18. The man who will discourse well on all the miseries of this life and human infirmities, may yet be ignorant of these things: there is no man but he knows some want; but what is it he misses? Nothing but what concerns his present-being and well-being in this world, and so the world may supply it; but the Christian wants something this vain world will not make up: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth I desire beside thee," says the soul that hath found God; and whom want I in heaven but thee? Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26, says the soul that seeks God; he wants God's favour, and the light of his reconciled countenance, Psal. iv. 6. If ye ask him, what seek ye, what want ye in all the world? he answers, "And now, Lord, what wait I for?" my heart and "my hope is in thee," Psal. xxxix. 7. None needed ask at Mary, "Whom seekest thou?" any body that knows her, knows her want; it is he, the Christ Jesus, and she thinks all the world should want him, and seek him with her, and thinks nobody should be ignorant of him, for she speaks to the gardener, as if there had been no other in the world, John xx. 15. But,

Secondly, His wants put him to seeking, to diligence; he misses something, and O it is a great something, in-

finitely more than he is worth in the world! he wants being and well-being, he thinks himself as good as lost, and he comes at length to some point of resolution with the lepers of Samaria, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. "Why sit we here till we die? If we enter into the city, there is famine; if we sit still, we perish; if we go out, we may find bread:" and so the poor soul, with Mordecai and Esther, comes to this conclusion, "If I perish, I perish." Nothing but perishing as I am; I will go and seek salvation in Jesus Christ, and it may be I will find it; who knows but he may turn again! Resolution is born a man at first, a giant; it goes out to the outmost border of want the first day. Wanting makes desire, and desire attended with some hope, makes up resolution and purpose; and when the soul is thus principled, then in the third room it comes forth to action. Desire and hope give legs to the soul for the journey; and now the wanting Christian, ye shall find his hand in every good turn, his feet in every ordinance: ye shall find him praying, reading, and hearing. It is true, resolution is born a man, and practice is born but a child, and scarcely will come up in many years to the stature of resolution; always diligence and violence is the qualification of his practice, Heb. xi. 6. Matt. xi. 12, and this written upon his using of means, "How love I the Lord? I am sick of love." The Christian's diligence in the use of means proclaims his earnest desire to obtain; whereas, many a man's practice speaks but a coldrife and indifferent spirit: that is a neutral, who cares not whether he obtain or miss. Some Christians have some missings of God and spiritual things; but, alas! their want, and sight of want makes them twice miserable, because it puts not their hand to action; the slothful and sluggard's desire slays him, "because his hands refuse to labour," Prov. xxi. 25. O! but he finds many difficulties in the way; though he have half a wish, or a raw desire after Christ, yet it never comes further than a conditional wish. A beggar may wish to be a king, he comes to no purpose in it, and therefore, his way is call-

ed a hedge of thorns; whereas, a seeking Christian finds a plain path where he goes, Prov. xv. 14. The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the way, and a lion in the streets;" he concludes upon the means and duties of religion before ever he try them, Prov. xxii. 13; xix. 23. How lazy is he? he will not bring his hand out of his bosom when he hath put it in. Thus the lazy and secure Christian is a brother to a great waster; his desire consumes him; he hath no more religion, but a spunk [*i. e.* small flame] of desire, and he sits down in this spark of his own kindling, and the life of religion thrives not upon his hand, Prov. xviii. 9, 12. His seeking must have violence with it, Matt. xi. 12. But we may also observe concerning the Christian, that he is,

Thirdly, Defined on this side of time as a seeker in heaven; he is an enjoyer, and he seeks no more; for how can "the ox low over his fodder?" He sits down to eat the fruit and sweat of his labour; and well may he triumphantly say, as the ancient philosopher said, "I have found, I have found." But here he is a seeker still; whatever he miss, he is still a seeker, and whatever he find he is yet a seeker. He is named not from his finding, but his seeking, not from his enjoyment or attainment, but from his endeavour and aim; though he find righteousness in Jesus, and remission of sins, yet he is a seeker of grace; though he be justified, yet he seeks holiness. There are many who would seek no more of God than pardon of sin; let him deliver them from hell, and they will trouble God with no more requests. Doth not some of your own consciences speak, that ye would seek no more from Christ than to be saved from an ill hour, and to be found in him; whereas, Paul was not content with this, but made an holy gradation; as we read, Phil. iii. 8, &c. He desired to know the power of Christ's resurrection, and to be made conformable to him by any means; and now, when he is found in Christ, and justified, he counts not himself well, or perfect and complete, or to have attained that which he struggled earnestly for.

Would not many be content with a Saviour? but they love not to hear of a king to rule over them, nor of his laws to regulate their lives by; they love an imputed holiness as well as righteousness. But the true seeker seeks grace within him, though he be justified, or freed from guilt and condemnation, and have the righteousness of Christ to cover him; and yet, though he should never come into condemnation for sin, yet he seeks the death and destruction of it in his soul, and the life of holiness implanted and perfected in his inward man. Though he is sure of heaven, yet he would have God's image upon his spirit, and whole man.

Secondly, Whatever degree of grace he have or attain, yet he is still a wanter, and still a seeker; he counts not himself "to have attained, or to be already perfect, but presses forward to gain the mark and prize of God's high calling," Phil. iii. 13, 14. He stands at no pitch, but forgets what is behind, and overlooks it, he thinks it not worthy to come in reckoning; there is still so much before his hand, that he apprehends it to be lost time to reckon what is past; his aim is to perfect holiness in the fear of God. He endeavours to be holy as God is holy, who is the completest pattern of unspotted purity and uprightness, and to be holy in all manner of conversation. He goes from strength to strength, till he appear blameless before God; he seeks grace for grace, Psal. lxxxiv. 5—8. And truly the man who seeks the exact copy or pattern Jesus Christ, who is gone before his people into heaven, and he who knows the spiritual command in all its dimensions, he will not say, I have found, but will still want more than he hath, and seeks what he wants. There are some professors who have attained some pitch and degree, as it were, in the first day, and never advance further; they have gotten a gift of prayer, some way of discharging duties, some degree in profession, and they miss no more; look on them some years after, and ye would say they have sought no more: and truly, he who seeks no more, shall never be able to keep what he hath

already, as a fire must soon die away if ye add not new fuel to it. Christians are not green in old age, because they have come to a pitch in their religion, and stand there; no, religion should not come to its stature hereaway, this is but the time of its minority; grace should be still on the growing hand. The grace of God is but a child here; heaven and eternity make the man,—glory is the man, who was once child grace.

Thirdly, The good Christian is still a seeker till Christ be all in all; till he apprehend that for which he is apprehended: as long as he is in this world he is a seeker; whereof, ye will say,—not only of more grace here, but of glory hereafter. Here he "hath no continuing city, but he seeks one to come," Heb. xiii. 10. He is a pilgrim on earth, embracing the promises afar off, and seeking his country, even heaven itself, Heb. xi. 13, &c. All your present enjoyments in this world, your own houses and land, would not make you think yourselves at home; if ye were Christians at the heart, ye would miss consolation, ye would want happiness in the affluence of all created things; and therefore, Christians, do ye want nothing when all things go according to your mind? Is there no hole in your heart that a world cannot fill up? This is not well: ye ought to seek a city while ye are in your own country; and ye should never think yourselves at home till ye be in heaven. The Christian gets some taste of the fruits of the land, some clusters in the wilderness, and house of his pilgrimage; and this makes him long to be there, this inflames the soul's desire, and turns it all in motion to seek that which was so sweet. If hope be so sweet, what shall the thing possessed be? If a grape brought a savour and taste so refreshful, what must the grapes plucked from the tree of life be, and the rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore? Sit not down then, Christians, upon your enjoyments, whether they be worldly or spiritual, but aspire to high things.

XVI.

Matt. vi. 33.—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, &c.

Secondly, The Christian's chief employment should be, to "seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,"—"Seek first," &c. Upon this, he should first and chiefly spend his thoughts, and affections, and pains. We comprehend it in three things: (1.) He should seek to be clothed upon with Christ's righteousness, and this ought to take up all his spirit; this is the first care and the chief concern. Did not this righteousness weigh much with Paul, when he "counted all things but loss and dung, that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith in Christ Jesus?" Phil. iii. 8, 9. Now, this righteousness is of more concernment than all the world beside. For,

First, It is God's righteousness, Rom. x. 3, 4; 2 Cor. v. 21; and this holds out a threefold excellence in it. (1.) It is God's righteousness, because he alone devised it, and found it out; all the world could not have imagined a way possible to save lost mankind, or even one sinner of that wretched number; satisfaction to justice was needful, and there was none righteous among Adam's posterity. But here, God himself, in his everlasting counsel, hath found it out, and all hath flowed from his love; the mission of Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins, comes from this blessed fountain, 1 John iv. 9, 10. Rom. iii. 24, 25. God hath been framing this righteousness from all eternity, and even this world seems to be made for this end. All God's dispensation with Adam, his making a covenant of works with him, his mutability and liableness to fall, and so governing all things in his holy providence, that he should fall from his own righteousness, and involve all his posterity in the same condemnation with himself; all this seems to be in respect of God's

intention and purpose, even ordained for this end,—that the righteousness of Jesus Christ might be commended to you, far more than all the dispensation of the law upon Sinai; more than the curse and the command, the thunder and the lightning. The very condemnation of the scripture was all in God's own mind and revealed will also, as the means appointed to lead sinners to this righteousness, Rom. x. 4; therefore, how precious should that be to us, that God keeps and preserves the world for?

Secondly, By this righteousness alone we can stand before God, and therefore it is termed God's righteousness; and is not this enough to make it lovely in the eyes of all men? This is the righteousness without the law, though it was witnessed both by the law and the prophets. This is the only righteousness that justifies, when all men are found guilty before God, Rom. iii. 19, &c. Now, what is it in this world can profit you, if ye want this? Condescend upon all your pleasures and heart-wishes, let you have them all; and now, poor soul, pray what hast thou? Though thou hast gained the world, thou losest thy soul, that thou shouldst use the world with. Let you then get what you so eagerly pursue in the world; what will ye do, when your soul is required of the hand of justice? "then whose shall these things be?" Luke xii. 20, 21. By all these things, a man neither knows love nor hatred; as Solomon speaks of external enjoyments, Eccles. ix. 1. But here is the way, O men, how ye may stand before God, here it is only. Will it profit you to enjoy the world, and lose God; and when all these things leave you, and ye leave them, what will ye do? for riches will not go to the grave with you. All that is here cannot help you in that day, when ye must stand before the Judge of all flesh; if a man be not found in Christ, he is gone, and if he be found in him, then the destroying angel passes by. Death hath a commission to do him good, God is become his friend in Jesus. If ye could walk never so blamelessly in this world, all this

will not come as a righteousness in God's sight, nor stand before him; it is only the righteousness of Christ that can be a covering to sinners. But,

Thirdly, This is God's righteousness, because it is the righteousness of Christ, who is truly God, and so it is divine. This is the most excellent piece in all the creation that comes from Jesus Christ,—his life, death, and resurrection. And let all men's inherent holiness blush here and be ashamed; let all your prayers, good wishes, your religious obedience, be ashamed, let them evanish as the stars before the sun; the righteousness of Christ is the bright sun that makes all the dim sparkles of nature, civil honesty, and even religious education disappear. Let even angels blush before him, for they are not clean in his sight, but may be charged with folly. Innocent Adam was also a glorious creature, but the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit, and the Lord from heaven, hath an infinitely transcendent and supereminent excellency and prerogative beyond him, and all the creation of God. Look, then, upon this Jesus, how he is described as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 1, 2, 3; Col. i. 15, &c., and wonder that such a glorious One should become our righteousness, that he should take our sins upon him, 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 24, and make over his righteousness to us. This is the righteousness of the saints in heaven, Rev. xix. 8, this is the glory of the spirits of just men made perfect. Think ye, my friends, that the glorious saints shall wear their own holiness upon their outside in heaven? No, no, the righteousness of Christ shall cover them, and that shall be the upper garment that all the host of heaven must glory in. Now, this is the thing that the child newborn, if he had the use of reason, should first cry for, before ever he get the breast,—to be reconciled to God in Christ. Would ye, then, spend your time and thoughts upon other things, if ye knew what need ye have of his righteousness, and how suitable it were to your need? Should not the beggar seek food and clothing? Should

not the sick man seek health, and the poor man riches? here they are all in Christ's righteousness. Ye are under the curse of God, this righteousness redeems from the curse; ye are sinners, and none of you righteous, no, not one; but Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. O sinners, wonder at the change! hath Christ taken on your sins, that his righteousness might become yours, and will ye not do so much as seek it? But many a man beguiles his own soul, and thinks he seeks this righteousness in the gospel; therefore ye would know what it is to seek his righteousness: if ye seek it, ye want your own righteousness; and who of you have come this length,—to judge yourselves, that ye be not judged? It is a great difficulty to convince the multitude of sin. That general notion that we are all sinners, is but the delusion that many souls perish in; never any will deny themselves to seek another righteousness, till they be beaten and driven out of their own: there is need of submission to take and receive this righteousness, let be to seek it. And now tell me, can ye say, that ye have seen all in yourselves as dung and dross, that ye count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, Phil. iii. 8, 9; that ye have seen all your own privileges and duties loss? and are ye even sensible, that prayer will no more help you, than the cutting of a dog's neck? Ye that lay so much weight upon your being baptized, and upon outward privileges, are ye void of righteousness? No, ye seek to establish your own, and do not submit to the righteousness of God. In a word, all who are ignorant of this righteousness of God in Christ, ye all seek to establish your own; there needs no more; but not one of twenty of you can tell what this is, it is a mystery. Ask at any of you, how ye shall be saved, ye will say, by prayer to God, and the mercy of God; ye cannot tell the necessity of Christ's coming into the world.

Secondly, Ye must see an impossibility to attain a righteousness, or to stand before God another way: when

ye miss this righteousness, and are convinced of sin, it is not the running to prayer will help or mend it. When ye see the broken covenant, ye fall upon doing something to mend your faults, with some good turns, and some will make a few good works answer all the challenges of sin; alas! this is a seeking of your own righteousness. Many a poor broken man seeks to make up his fortune: poor wretched sinners are building up the breach of the old covenant, putting up props under an old ruinous house, seeking to establish it, and rear it up again; but ye will never seek Christ, till ye cannot do better, till ye be desperate of helping yourselves without him. Now, I appeal to your consciences; who among you was ever serious in this matter, to examine your own condition, whether you were enemies or friends? Ye took it for granted all your days; no, but never a man will betake himself to an imputed righteousness, but only he that flies, taken with his enmity, and is pursued by the avenger of blood, and he flies in to this righteousness as a city of refuge.

Thirdly, Ye must seek this righteousness; and what is it to seek it? It is even to take it and to receive it; it is brought to your door; it is offered, and the convinced sinner hath no more to do but hearken, and this righteousness is brought near unto him. Prayer to God, and much dealing with him, is one of the ways of obtaining this righteousness; but coming to Jesus Christ is the comprehensive short gate, [*i. e.* way] and therefore it is called the righteousness of faith, and the righteousness of God by faith. Now, shall ye be called seekers of Christ's righteousness, who will not receive it when it is offered? Ye who have so many objections and scruples against the gospel, and the application of it, ye in so far are not seekers, but refusers of the gospel, and disobedient. Christ's righteousness should meet with a seeker, not a disputer; any thing God allows you to seek, certainly he allows you to take and receive it when it is brought unto you: and therefore, whoever have need of Jesus Christ, not

only refuse him not, but stay not till they find him come to them; this noble resolution, I will give myself no rest till I be at a point in this. Seek him as a hid treasure, as that which your happiness depends upon. (1.) The kingdom of grace is worthy of all your affections and pains; that despised thing in the world called grace, is the rarest piece in the creation, and if we could look on it aright, we would seek grace, and follow after it. Grace extracts a man out of the multitude of men, that are all of one mass; grace separates him from the rest of the world, and to this purpose are these usual phrases in scripture,—"Such were some of you;" "Once ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; among whom ye had your conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh." All men are alike by nature and birth; there is no difference: grace brought to light by the gospel makes the difference, and separates the few chosen vessels of glory and mercy from the world; "and now ye are not of the world, as I am not of the world." All the rest of men's aims and endeavours cannot do this. Learning makes not a man a Christian; honour makes not a man differ from a Gentile or pagan; riches make you no better than infidels. Speak of what ye will, you shall never draw a man entirely out of the cursed race of Adam; never distinguish from Gentiles before God, till the Spirit of regeneration blow where he listeth. And this is grace's prerogative beyond all other things. All other excellent gifts, even the gift of preaching, praying, all these are common, so to speak, and in a manner befal to all alike; your external calling is but common, but he gives grace to all his chosen ones. But, (2.) Grace puts a man in a new kingdom; it draws a man out of Satan's kingdom, and makes him a king, who before was a subject. The man was led captive by sin and Satan at their pleasure,—he served his own corrupt lusts and the prince of this world. Sin reigned in his mortal body; whatever his passion and corruption did put him to, he could have no bridle, but as a horse went on to the battle: and ye

may see daily, that there is scarce one of an hundred that is master of himself, but he is a servant of sin ; but grace makes him a priest and a king, Rev. i. 6 ; vii. 8, 10. He can now command himself ; sin reigned before unto death, but now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, Rom. v. 20, 21. And O ! but this victory over a man's self, is more than a man's conquering a strong city; this victory is more than all the triumphs and trophies of the world's conquerors ; for they could not conquer themselves, the little world, but were slaves to their own lusts. Some men talk of great spirits that can bear no injury, nay, but such a spirit is the basest spirit; the noble spirit is that spirit which can despise these things, and be above them. Grace puts men upon a throne of eminence above the world ; the Spirit of God makes a man of a noble spirit. (3.) Grace translates a man from Satan's kingdom to God, and makes him a subject, a free-born subject of God or Christ's kingdom, and therefore, Christ is the king of saints, Rev. xv. 3. Our Lord and Saviour hath an everlasting kingdom, 2 Pet. i. 11. We were subjects of the powers of darkness ; but grace makes the translation into the kingdom of God's own dear Son, Col. i. 13. Now, what an unspeakable privilege is this, to be one of Christ's subjects, who is our dear Saviour and King ? Surely we must all be great courtiers. David, the great king of Israel, had this for his chief dignity, his style of honour,—the servant of the Lord, as kings use to write down themselves, and this was his title, " servant of God." Paul gloried much in this : " Paul an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ." And sure, all the families of heaven and earth may think it their highest honour to get liberty to bow their knees to Jesus, " the King of kings, and Lord of lords," the first-born of God's creation. The converted man is turned from the power of Satan to God : Mark but the emphasis of these two terms, mark the whence or from, that it is from Satan, the great destroyer of mankind, the first transgressor and deceiver, and how great is his power, tyranny,

and dominion! He had us all in chains reserved for the day of judgment; but what a happy change! grace turns us from him,—but the term to which is more admirable; it is to God, to Christ, to true religion; to God himself most high: And oh! but this must be a more wonderful and excellent change than our conversion from darkness to light, from hell to heaven; these are but shadows of this glorious conversion. (4.) Grace makes a man likewise a partaker of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. This is the image and glory of God, this is the imitation and resemblance of God's spotless holiness and purity, "be ye holy, as I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. Every creature hath some dark characters of God. Some things speak his power, some things his wisdom, but this he hath called his own image; and so the Christian is more like unto God than all the world beside: this is the magnifying of a man, and making him but a little lower than the angels, Psalm viii. 3, 4. Therefore God loves grace better than all the creation; holiness is a great beauty, and God requires to be worshipped in the beauties of it; albeit grace be often clouded with infirmities, and sometimes is reckoned despicable, because of the vessel it is in, yet it is precious as the finest gold, and more precious than any rubies: It is like gold in ashes, not the less excellent in itself, though it appear not so; but sin is the devil's image and likeness, and therefore Satan is called the father of sinners; "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." O but sin hath an ugly shape! it is the only spot in the face of the creation which God's soul abhors, "for he loves righteousness, and hates iniquity," Psalm xlv. 6, 7. (5.) But there is one thing more, that may commend grace to all your hearts. Grace is the way to glory; it gives title and right to or at least declares it, it is inseparably joined; grace is glory in the bud, and glory is the flower of grace; grace is young glory, and glory is old grace: "Without holiness it is impossible to see God's face in peace;" no man can come unto heaven without grace; glorification is the first

link of the chain, Rom. viii. 30. But sanctification must intervene first, for no unclean thing can enter into heaven; but he that "gives grace gives glory," Psalm lxxxiv. 11. Heaven cannot receive many of you, because ye have not holiness; but it may commend holiness unto you, that it ministers an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As much as eternity is beyond the poor span of your time, as much is grace and holiness (whereon depends your everlasting condition) preferable to all things of this present vain world. O! but the children of men have many vain pursuits of the creature, that when it is had is nothing and vanity; ye labour to secure an inch of your being, and to have contentment in this half day, and never look beyond it to many millions of ages when ye are to continue. Your honour, your pleasure, your gain, your credit, many such things like these, can have no influence on the next world; these cannot go through death with you: only grace and holiness begun here are consummated in glory, and make the poor man that was miserable for a moment, eternally happy.

XVII.

Matth. vi. 33.—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

The perfection even of the most upright creature speaks always some imperfection in comparison of God, who is most perfect. The heaven, the sun and moon, in respect of lower things here, how glorious do they appear, and without spot! But behold they are not clean in God's sight! How far are the angels above us, who dwell in clay, they appear to be a pure mass of light and holiness; yet even these glorious beings cannot behold this light without covering their faces, these God may charge with folly. "God is light," saith the Apostle, 1 John i. 5; this is his pecu-

liar glory, for "in him there is no darkness at all." Is there any thing more excellent and divine, than to seek God, and find him, and enjoy him? Yet even that holds forth the emptiness of the creature in its own bosom, that cannot be satiated within but must come forth to seek happiness; nay. even the greatest perfection of the creature speaks out the creature's own self-indigence most, because its happiness is the removal from itself unto another, even unto God the fountain of life.

Now the enjoyment of this "kingdom of God" mentioned in the text, holds forth man's own insufficiency for well-being within himself; but "seeking this kingdom" declares a double want, a want of it altogether: Not only he hath it not in himself, but not at all, and so must go out and seek it. God is blessed in himself, and self-sufficient, and all sufficient to others; without is nothing but what has flowed from his inexhausted fulness within; so that though he should stop the conduit, by withdrawing his influence, and make all the creatures to evanish as a brook, or a shadow, he should be equally in himself blessed. "Darkness and light are both alike to thee," says David in another sense, Psalm cxxxix. 11, 12; and indeed they are all one in this sense, that he is no more perfected and bettered when all the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, follow him with an eternal song, than before the mountains and hills were when nothing was brought forth. Many thousand more worlds would add nothing to him, nor diminish any thing from him. It is not so with man; he is bounded and limited, he cannot have well-being in his own breast; he was indeed created with it in the enjoyment of God, which was his happiness, so that he had it not to seek but to keep, he had it not to follow after, but to hold it still fast: But now, alas! he hath lost that, and become miserable. Once all Adam's posterity were void of happiness; by catching at a present shadow of pleasure, and satisfaction to his senses, he lost this excellent substance of blessedness

in communion with God. Now how shall this be recovered again? How shall this pearl of great price be found?

Certainly we must agree upon two principles, and according to them walk, ere we come within reach of this. It is a great question that is of more moment than all the debates among men; How shall man's ruin be made up, and the treasure be found? If ye think it concerns you, I pray you hearken to this, and condescend upon these two grounds, that the question may be right stated. One is, we have all lost happiness, fallen from the top of our excellency, into the lowest dungeon of misery; we are cast down from heaven to hell. There needs not much to persuade you of the truth of this in general; but, alas, who ponder it in their hearts! And, until ye think more seriously upon it, ye will never be serious in the search for reparation of it. All of you, by your daily experience, find that ye are miserable creatures; ye have no satisfaction nor contentment; ye are compassed about with many infirmities and griefs, but this is but an appendix of your misery. All the calamities of this life are but a consequent, a little stream of that boundless ocean of misery that is yet insensible to you. Therefore, enter into your own hearts, and consider what Adam once was, and what ye now are, nay, what ye will all quickly be, if God prevent it not. We are born heirs of wrath and hell; it is not only the infinite loss of that blessed sight of his face for evermore, which an eternal enjoyment of creature pleasures could not compensate the want of one hour; but it is the kingdom of darkness, and the devil, that we are all born to inherit. Let this, then, once take root in your heart, that ye are in extreme misery, and a remedy must be provided, else ye must perish. Now, when this principle is established, ye must agree upon this also,—"But out of myself I must go,—blessedness I must have,—it is not in me; while I look in, there is nothing but all kind of emptiness, and, which is worse, all kind of misery; not only the com-

mon lot of creatures (that none is sufficient to its own well-being) is incident to me. But I have lost that being which I had in another, which was my well-being, and do now possess, or shall shortly possess, all misery." Now, are ye settled upon these two? I am not happy,—I must go out of myself to find it; it is not in me, "in my flesh dwells no good thing," in my spirit and flesh both is nothing good. Ask, then, this great question, Whither shall I go? What shall I do to find it? All men know they must seek it, but Christ tells where they shall seek it, and whither they shall go. The word of the gospel is for this very purpose, to answer this question. If we were sensible that we had lost happiness, certainly we would be earnest in this question, Where shall it be recovered? what shall I seek after? And no answer would satisfy but the gospel itself, that directs unto the very fountain of life, and holds forth the kingdom of God as the true happiness of men, to be sought. "Seek ye first," says Christ, "the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof." Here is only a solid answer, Seek me, for I am eternal life; I am the life and the light of men. O that your souls answered with David, "thy face, Lord, I will seek." Peter had sought and found, and thought himself well, so that he answers Christ with great vehemency, when he said unto his disciples, "Will ye also leave me?" Peter saith, Leave thee, Lord! "To whom should we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life! And we believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," John vi. 66, &c. "It were all the absurdity in the world to leave thee, or to go to any other thing for life itself; shall not death be found, if I leave life. It were madness not to seek thee; but what shall it be called to leave thee, when I have found and tasted thee to be so good?" Every man misses happiness and justification within himself, and so is upon the search after it; but is it not strange, that all the experiences of nations, and generations conjoined in one, cannot hold

forth even a probable way of attaining it. Gather then all in one; the sum and result is, "We have heard the fame thereof with our ears, but it is hid from the eyes of all living," as we read more fully, and should apply what Job said of wisdom to the true happiness of man, Job xxviii. 12, to the end of that chapter. Certainly there is some fundamental and common mistake among men; they know not what was once man's happiness, and so it is impossible they can seek the right remedy. Look upon us all; what do we seek after? It is some present thing, some bodily and temporal thing that men apprehend their happiness lies in; and so, whether they attain it or not, or being attained, it doth not answer our expectation; and thus still are we disappointed, and our base scent becomes a vain pursuit, whether we overtake it or not. Every man proposes this within himself as the principle of his life and conversation; What shall I seek after? What shall I spend most of my time and affections upon to drive at? And alas! all men, save those whose eyes the Spirit openeth, err in the very foundation. One man propones honour to himself, another pleasure, and a third riches, and the most part seek all of them, some accommodation and satisfaction in a present world. And almost every man conceives he would be blessed, if he had that which he wants, and sees another have.

Now, while men's designs are thus established, all must be wrong; the ship is gone forth, but it will never land on the coast of happiness. And thus we see men seek many things. They are divided among many thoughts and cares, because no one thing is found that can satisfy, and so we have put ourselves upon an endless journey to go through all the creatures; neither one nor altogether have what we want, and neither one nor all can be had, or possessed with assurance, though it had it. But the gospel comes to lay a right foundation, and frame a right principle within us. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God,"—here is the principal design that should be driven

at; and if men would make it, and follow it, O how should they be satisfied with the fulness of that kingdom, the vast dimensions of it, the incorruptibleness of it!

Now, there is one of two ye must fall upon, either many things, or one thing. All that a man can seek after, is here ranked: On the one side is many things; "all these things," that is food, raiment, honour, pleasure, and such like, that concern the body, or men's condition here in this world; and these things a man hath need of, verses 31, 32, "Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Nay, there is but one thing that is set up against all these many things, namely, the "kingdom of God and his righteousness." Now without all controversy the more unity be, there will be the more satisfaction. If all other things be equal, it is a kind of torment to have so many doors to go to for help. If a man could have all in one, he would think many things a great vexation and burden. If any one thing had in it as much as to answer all our necessities, that one thing would be of great price, beyond many things, having but so much virtue among them all. I shall suppose, then, that there were real satisfaction and happiness to be found in the affluence and conjunction of all created things here; that there was some creature that could answer every necessity of men; yet I say, would ye not exchange all that variety, and multitude, if ye could find one thing that did all that to the full, that so many did, but no more. Then certainly ye would choose a variety in one thing, beyond the scattered satisfaction in many things. But, when it is not to be found in all these things, and though it were, yet all these are not consistent together, then of necessity we must make another search. I say, then, in the name of Jesus Christ, that if ye seek satisfaction in this present world, ye shall be disappointed; ye may be all your days sowing and plowing, but ye shall

not see the harvest. Ye shall never reap the fruit of your labour, but in the end of your days shall be fools, and see yourselves to have been so, when you thought yourselves wise. I shall also suppose that ye have attained what ye have with so much vexation toiled for, that ye had your barns and coffers full, that all the varieties of human delights were still attending you, that ye were set upon a throne of eminency above others; and in a word, that ye had all that your soul desired, so that no room was left empty for more desire, and more grief to enter into your hearts. Are ye blessed for all that? No, certainly; if ye do but consider that with all, ye may lose your own souls, and that quickly, and that your spirits must remove out of that palace of pleasure and delight, into eternal torment, and then count, are ye blessed or not? What gained ye? It is madness to reckon upon this life, it is so inconsiderable when compared with eternity. A kingdom, what is it, when a man shall be deprived for evermore of the kingdom of God, and inhabit the kingdom of darkness under the king of terrors? Do ye think a stage-player a happy man, that for an hour hath so much mirth and attendance, and for all his lifetime is kept in prison without the least drop of these comforts? Will not such a man's momentary satisfaction make hell more unsatisfying, and add grounds of bitterness to his cup? for it is misery to have been happy.

Nay, but this is a fancied supposal; all this, how small soever it be, was never, and never shall be within the reach of any living. Ye may reckon beforehand, and lay down two things as demonstrated by Scripture and all men's experience. One is, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" under the sun. All that ye can attain by your endeavours for an age, and by sweating and toiling, will not give you one hour's satisfaction, without some want, some vexation, either in wanting or possessing. Nay, though you had all, it could not give you satisfaction, the soul could not feed upon these things; it would be like silver and gold which could not save a starving man, or

nourish him, as meat and drink doth. A man cannot be happy in a marble palace, for the soul is created with an infinite capacity to receive God, and all the world will not fill his room. Another is, That it is impossible for you to attain all these things. One thing is inconsistent with another, and your necessity requires both. Now, then, how shall ye be satisfied when they cannot meet? I think then, the spirits of the most part of us do not rise very high, to seek great things in this world. We are in such a lot among men; I mean, that we have not great expectation of wealth, pleasures, honours, or such like. Oh then, so much the more take heed to this, and see what ye resolve to seek after. Ye do not expect much satisfaction here; then, I pray you, hearken to this one thing, "seek the kingdom of God."

This kingdom of heaven and righteousness are equivalent unto, nay, they exceedingly surpass all the scattered perfections and goodness among these many things, or all things that God hath promised to add to them in the text. Why should I say equivalent? alas, there is no comparison! "For I reckon," says Paul, Rom. viii. 18, 19, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." What this kingdom is in itself, is beyond our conception; but all those things which God will add thereunto, are to be considered only as an appendix to it. Is not heaven an excellent kingdom? All that ye are now toiling about, and taking thought for,—these, "all these things," (as a consequent to itself,) food, and raiment, and such like, "shall be given you," as your heavenly Father judges fit; "for godliness," says the apostle, 1 Tim. iv. 8, "is profitable unto all things, having the promises of this life," as well as of "the life to come." I think, then, if all men would but rationally examine this business, they would be forced to cry out against the folly and madness of too many men, who have their portion only in this life, Psal. xvii. 14.

What is it ye seek? ye flee from godliness as your great enemy; ye think religion an adversary to this life and the pleasures of it. Nay, but it is a huge mistake, for "it hath the promises of this life, and that which is to come." Ye cannot abide to have Christ's kingdom within you, ye will not have him to rule over you, ye will not renounce self, and your own righteousness. But consider, O men, that here is that which ye should seek after; here is wealth, and honour, and long life, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. Ye seek many things first, and ye will not seek this one thing needful, Luke x. 41, 42. But there is the way to get what ye seek more certainly and solidly, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these other things" will come of will; ye need not seek them, for your heavenly Father knows best what ye need. Behold what a satisfying portion this kingdom is! when the pitch and height of men's attainments in this world is but a consectary, an appendicle of it, what must this kingdom be in itself, when all these things follow as attendants? Here then, is one thing worth all, and more than all, even "Jesus Christ who is all in all," Col. iii. 10, 11. Ye speak of many kingdoms; nay, but here is one kingdom,—the kingdom of grace and glory, that hath in it eminently all that is scattered among all things. It unites us to Jesus Christ, "in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells; and ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power," Col. ii. 9, 10. In his house is fatness, and ye shall be satisfied with this, and drink of those rivers of everlasting pleasures, that are at his right hand, Psalm xxxvi. 8, 9; Psal. xvi. 11. When the pious Psalmist was overcharged with the very forethought and apprehension of this, he says, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore, the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings," Psal. xxxvi. 7. "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee!" Psal. xxxi. 19, 20. When the sight

of it afar off, and the taste of it in this wilderness, is of so much virtue, what shall the drinking of that well-head be, when the soul shall be drowned in it?

As these things are divided—on the one side, many things, and on the other, one kingdom, more worth than all; so are men divided accordingly. On the one hand, are the nations and Gentiles, on the other, a poor handful,—ye my disciples. "Seek ye," says Christ, "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things,—what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed,—shall be added; for after all these things the Gentiles seek, and your Father knoweth that ye have need of them. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 29, 41. Now, this division hath been always in the world; "for many say," Psal. iv. 6, 7, "Who will shew us any good?" They have their affections gathered in one channel toward one thing,—they are as it were but one man: "But Lord, lift, thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." Here then is even the course of the world, the way of the multitude; they have their way scattered, their gain lies in many arts; many things they must seek, because they forsake the one thing necessary. When they forsake the one "fountain of living water, they must dig up, and hew out to themselves many broken cisterns, that can hold no water," no one to help another. This is even proclaimed by the conversation of a great part of the world. Do ye not declare this by your eager pursuit of this world, and the things of it, and your careful thoughts of it, that ye have no mind of eternity, or the kingdom to come? Ye seek nothing but things here, and these do not descend after you. Be persuaded, I beseech you, be persuaded of this, that when ye have your hearts below, ye are no better, the most part of you, than pagans. Ye have this pretence, that it is necessary to live and follow some calling; it is true, indeed: But, is it not more

necessary to live for ever after death, than for a moment? Godliness will not prejudge this life or thy calling; but ye seek after these things, as if ye were to live eternally in this vain world. Ye could toil no more, take no more thought for a million of ages, than ye do now for the morrow. This prejudges and shuts out all thoughts of heaven or hell. Ye are called to a kingdom; this is offered unto you; will ye be so mad as to refuse it, and embrace the dunghill, and scrape it still together? We declare unto you in his name, who is truth itself, that if ye will be persuaded to be Christians indeed, ye shall have these outward things ye have need of, without care and anxiety, which now ye are tormented for. And for superfluities, what need ye care for them; a reasonable man should despise them, and much more a Christian. If ye would not be as pagans without the church, ye must be sober in these things, mortified and dead unto them. There shall be no real difference between thee and a heathen, in the day of appearing before Christ's tribunal, O Christian, except thou hast denied and despised this world, and sought principally the things that are above. Is Christianity no more, I pray you, but a name? Ye would all be called Christians; why will ye not be so indeed? for the name will never advantage you, but in the day of judgment, it shall be the greatest accession and weight unto your guiltiness, and also to your judgment. Ye would all now be accounted Christians, but if ye be not so in truth and indeed, the day will come that ye shall wish from your soul ye had wanted the name also, and had lived among those Gentiles and Pagans whose conversation ye did follow; for it shall be more tolerable for the covetous worldly pagan in that day, than the covetous Christian.

Oh that ye were once persuaded that there is an inconsistency in them, to seek these many things, and this one kingdom. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," in opposition to the Gentiles seeking of "many things." Ye may seek the world, but if ye seek

it, seek it as if ye sought it not, if ye use it, use it as if ye used it not, " or use the world as those who do not abuse it, knowing that the fashion thereof passes away." Certainly ye cannot withal seek grace and glory, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 32. Therefore, Christ says, to enforce this exhortation, Matt. vi. 24, " No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon." I fear many of you conceive that this belongs not to you; those who are not naturally covetous and greedy, who are not still in anxiety and perplexity about the things of the world, will possibly conceive themselves free: Nay, but look upon the division that Christ makes. Was there not many a heathen man among the nations as free of that covetousness noted among men? Were there not as gallant spirits among them, that cared as little for riches as any of us; nay, men every way of a more smooth and blameless carriage than the most part of us are? yet, behold the construction that Christ puts on them, "after all these things do the nations seek." I think many of them have declaimed more against the baseness of covetous spirits, than many Christian preachers, and in the very practice of it, have outstripped the most part of the Christian world; yet in the Scripture sense, even all those who have cried down the world, are but lovers of it, and of themselves too. How can this be? It is certain every man is composed of desires and breathings after something without himself. Some men's desires are more shallow and low than others; one man hath honour in admiration, and may despise riches; another follows his pleasure, and may neglect both these. Nay, possibly a man may be moderate in all these things, so that none can challenge him, and yet he is but a lover of the world, it is his master he serves, and the idol he worshippeth; because no man wants one, or many idols, something to take up his affection and desires. Now, though such a man seems moderate in these in comparison of others whose hearts run more after them, yet because there is no other thing,

that does take up his heart so much as these, he is but in Christ's account among the heathen nations. Some of you are not in great expectations, ye have but mean projects, ye seem content with few things; ye are not vexing yourselves as others do, but let the world come and go as it pleases, without much disquiet. This, I say, may be the temper of some natural spirits, yet I ask such of you, Is there any thing else ye seek more after, or spend more time and thought upon? and what is that? Is there any other thing ye are more taken up with, than your present ease and accommodation in this life? No certainly, ye cannot say so; however your projects be mean and low, yet they are confined within time and things present, and the kingdom of grace and glory, comes not much in your mind. Then, I say, thou art but a lover of the world; mammon is thy god; thou seekest not the kingdom of heaven, and shalt not obtain it, for that which the nations seek after is thy predominant.

Will ye then, I beseech you, gather in your hearts to consider this: Is it a light matter we speak of, life or death? Doth it not concern you as much as you are worth? Therefore, consider it as seriously as if you were going hence to be no more. Many of you will not grant worldly-mindedness a sin; when ye make it a god, and sacrifice unto it, ye fancy that ye are seeking heaven. I pray you, do not deceive your souls; give them as good measure as ye would do your bodies in any thing. Would ye say ye were seeking after any thing, I suppose, to find such a friend to speak to, would ye, I say, think that ye earnestly desired to see that friend, and sought him, if ye did all the day take up your time with other petty business that might be done at any time! How can ye imagine ye seek not the world but heaven, when, if ye would look back upon the current and stream, both of your affections and endeavours, ye would find they have run this way toward your present ease and satisfaction; ye do not give one entire hour to the thought of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, it may be in a whole week.

Are ye then seekers of the kingdom? If ye did but ex-

amine one day how it is spent, ye might pass a judgment upon your whole life. Do ye seek that first which is fewest times in your thoughts, and least in your affections, and hath least of your time bestowed on it? Alas! do not flatter yourselves: Ye seek first what is often in your mind, which uses to stir up your joy or grief or desire most: It is this present world only; and this present world is your portion; ye shall lose the kingdom of heaven by seeking to make the world sure. As for the children of God, ye who will be his disciples, (to such he speaks here) it becomes not you to be like the heathens. Ye ought most of all to adorn your holy profession, your high calling to a kingdom above. If then ye seek those things below, as if ye sought them not, ye ought to make religion your main business, else ye are not indeed religious. If Christianity take not up a man, he hath not the thing, but the name. "Seek first," that is, chiefly, principally, and above all, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Nay, this is more strange, it is a first that hath no second; seek "this first" so as if ye sought nothing else, and "all things" necessary here shall be superadded to the seeking and finding of this kingdom.

This is that which I would have engraven on all our hearts, that there is a necessity of making Christianity our calling and trade, our business and employment, else we must renounce it. It will take our whole man, our whole time, not spare hours, and by-thoughts; ye have a great task to accomplish, a great journey to make. "If ye give not all diligence to add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness and charity, ye are certainly blind, and see not afar off, and have not been purged from your old sins." 2 Pet. i. 5—11. This imports that those who make not religion their comprehensive study, do neither know eternity, nor see into it. Oh, how may this word strike unto the hearts of many Christians, and pierce as a sword! Is our lazy, indifferent and cold service at some appointed hours, all diligence? or, is it diligence at all? Is there not more diligence and

fervor in other things than this, to add grace to grace? Who is covetous of such a game? Are not many more desirous of adding lands and houses to their lands and houses, and money to their stock, than to add to their faith virtue? &c. Who among you is enlarging his desires as the grave after conformity to Jesus Christ, and the righteousness of his kingdom, that this treasure of grace may abound? Alas! we are poor mean Christians, because we are negligent; for "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," Prov. x. 4. But we become poor in grace, because we deal with slack hand. Is there any great thing that is attainable without much pains and sweating! *Difficilia quae pulchra.*

Think ye to come to a kingdom, by sleeping through some custom of godliness? "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? that man shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men," Prov. xxii. 29, this advances him to be a courtier; and is not this business of Christianity more considerable to be diligent about, when it advances a man into the court of heaven, into His presence in "whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life?" And not only so, but if ye be diligent here ye shall obtain a kingdom: "Seek first the kingdom of God; the hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the slothful shall be under tribute," Prov. xii. 24. If ye make this your business, and spend your spirits in it, ye shall be kings and priests with God in the kingdom above, that may suffer many partakers without division or emulation. It is he that overcomes that shall have the new name, the white raiment, the crown of life, and all the glorious things which are promised to them that overcome, in the second and third chapters of the Revelation. O what glad tidings are these! this is the gospel of peace, this is the joyful sound that proclaims unto us so great, so excellent things as a kingdom, the kingdom of God, an everlasting kingdom like God, a kingdom glorious as he is, a kingdom suitable to his royal majesty, and the magnificence of his palace above. Are we called into this by the gospel, and would ye

know what is the sum thereof? It is this, Ho every one that will have great things, ho every one that will be a king to God, and to bear rule over kings in the great day, come, here it is; overcome yourselves here in the "Lamb that hath overcome,"—follow Jesus "the captain of your salvation, who, for the joy and glory which was set before him," despised all the glory of this world, and the pains and shame of the cross, Heb. xii, 1, 2. "Why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. All ye toil about, what is it? children's fancies; such houses and kingdoms as they build in the sand. Why spend ye your time and labour upon earthly things that are at an end? Here is a kingdom worthy of all men's thoughts, and affections, and time; the diligent shall have it. Gird up the loins of your mind, and seek it as the one thing needful. Many of you desire this kingdom; but alas! these are sluggard's wishes. Ye have fainting desires after it; your desires consume and waste you: but ye put not forth your hand, and so ye have nothing. "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat," Prov. xiii. 4. Do ye see any growing Christian, but he that is much in the exercise of godliness, and very honest in it? See ye any fat souls, but diligent souls? Our barrenness and leanness hath negligence written upon it. Do ye not wonder that we are not fat and flourishing, as palms and cedars in the courts of our God? Certainly it is no wonder. Is it not a wonder that our sleeping away secure, keeps so much as the leaves of a profession upon us? Therefore, Christians, let this be your name—seekers, but seekers of what? Not of any new religion, but of the good old kingdom of God, proponed to us in the gospel. And remember, that the seeker must seek diligently, if he think that which he seeks worthy of finding: "He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6. Your seeking will proclaim your estimation of what ye seek; it will be written on it, what your desires

are. Many men's unfrequent and lazy prayers have this written upon them in legible characters,—I care not whether God grant or not. Diligence speaks affection, and affection principles diligence; and if ye be seekers, ye must be so still, till ye find, and have no more want; when ye have done all, ye must stand, Eph. vi. 10, 16. When ye have found all ye must seek, ye do but find in part, because the kingdom of God is but coming in the glory and perfection of it. Nay, I believe the more ye find the more ye will seek; because tasting what this kingdom is, can best engage the affection and resolution after it. Seeking is an exercise suitable to a Christian in this state of pilgrimage; enjoyment is for his own country, heaven. And shall not the bitterness and pains of seeking, sweeten the enjoyment of this kingdom when it is found? This will endear it and make it precious, yet it needs no supereminent and accessory sweetness, it is so satisfactory in itself. Christians, remember your name; when you have attained all, still seek more; for there is more to be found here than ye have yet found. It is sitting down on our attainments that makes us barren and lean Christians. Desires and diligence are the vital sap of a Christian. Enlarge once your desires as the grave, that never says I have enough: And ye have good warrant so to do, because that which ye are allowed to desire is without bounds and measure. It is inexhaustible; and when once desires have emptied the soul, and made it capable of such a great kingdom, then let your study be henceforth, to fill up that void with this kingdom: Let your diligence come up to desires, and at length ye shall be what ye would be, ye shall find what ye sought.

XVIII.

Matt. vi. 33.—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, &c.

"O SEEKEST thou great things for thyself," says God to Baruch, Jer. xlv. 6, "seek them not." How, then, doth he

command us in the text to seek a kingdom? Is not this a great thing? Certainly it is greater than these great things he would not have Baruch to seek after; and yet he charges us to seek after it. In every kind of creatures there is some difference,—some greater some lesser, some higher some lower; so there are some men far above others in knowledge, understanding, strength, and such like; yet such is the order God hath made,—that the lowest angel is above the highest man, so that in comparison of these, the greatest man is but a mean worm, a despicable nothing. Among things created, some are greater, some lesser; "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers," says David, "the moon and stars which thou hast ordained: what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Psal. viii. 3, 4. But when all these are compared with God, then the difference of greater and lesser disappears. In the night there are different lights,—the moon and stars, "and one star," says Paul, "differeth from another in glory;" some are of the first, some of the second, and most of them the third magnitude; nay, but let the sun arise, and all these are alike,—they are all darkness when compared with the sun's brightness. What, then, are angels and men to God, who is "a light inaccessible and full of glory? whom no eye hath seen nor can see; all nations before him are as nothing, yea, they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity," Isa. xl. 12—19; 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. The sun himself shines not before him, and the moon gives not her light. Now, is it not so proportionably here, if we stay within the sphere of temporal and worldly things? some are great, some small, some things of greater, some things of less consequence, greater or smaller in their appearance to us, and in men's fancies: but if we go further and look into eternity, then certainly all these will appear small and inconsiderable. This earth seems very spacious and huge in quantity unto us who dwell upon it; we discern mountains and valleys, sea and land, and do make many divi-

sions of it: but if one man were above where the sun is, and looked down upon the earth, he would consider it but as one point almost invisible, that had no proportion to the vast dimensions of heaven. Even so is it here, while men abide within their own orb, their natural understanding, and do compare time only with time, and temporal things with temporal, riches with poverty, honour with disgrace, pleasure with pain, learning with ignorance, strength with weakness, pleasant lands and goodly houses with wildernesses, and wild deserts where none do dwell. It is no wonder, I think, that those who compare themselves with some that commend themselves, are not wise, 2 Cor. x. 12, 13. There is but one perfect pattern they should look to, if they would not be deceived. While ye stay your thoughts within these bounds, ye apprehend in yourselves great odds between one thing and another: but if once the Spirit of God enlightened your eyes, and made you to see far off; if ye were elevated above your own station, to the watch-tower of the holy Scriptures, to behold from these, by the prospect of saving faith, things that are afar off, such as heaven and hell, eternity, salvation and condemnation; O how would these differences in a present world vanish out of sight in the presence of these vast and infinite things? Food and raiment are great things to the most part of men; therefore do they toil so much about them, and take so much thought for them; how to feed, and how to be clothed, how to have a full and delicate table, and fine clothes! Again, many others apprehend some greatness and eminency in honour and respect among men; others in pleasure and satisfaction to their senses, even as a beast would judge; others apprehend some worth and excellence in great possessions, in silver and gold beside them, and have a kind of complacency in these. But if once this kingdom of God entered into your heart; if ye saw the worth of it, the vast dimensions of it, the pleasure, honour, and profit of it, then certainly all other things would appear to be mean and low, not worth a thought beforehand; advantage

and disadvantage would be all one to you; honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, pleasure and pain, would have no distance from one another; this gain, this honour, this pleasure of the kingdom of God, would so overmaster them, so outshine them.

Nay, I must say, if ye but knew your immortal souls, or your own worth beyond the rest of the creatures, such as silver, gold, lands, houses, &c., I am confident ye would fall in your esteem of them, they would appear but low, base things in regard of the soul. Suppose even this world came in competition, (the gain of it now seems great gain), but I pray you, if ye laid all that world in the balance with your soul, what would weigh most? Christ holds it forth to a rational man, to judge of it: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or be cast away?" Would ye account yourselves gainers when ye have lost yourselves? Matt. xvi. 26; Luke ix. 25. Is not a man better than meat? Are not your souls more precious than the finest gold? When you lose your souls, whose shall these be? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And if there be no one more to possess or use, what profit is it? This, then, that we have in hand is one thing of greatest moment and concernment in the world. Let me then beseech you, to weigh these things in the balance of the sanctuary,—your souls, and this world,—the kingdom of God, and many temporal things, such as food and raiment. Ye never enter into the comparison of these things in your mind; if ye did, would ye not see to which side the balance would turn? therefore, we would have you look upon these words of our Saviour, which are the just balance of the sanctuary. Behold how the question is stated! how the comparison goeth: It is not whether I shall want food and raiment, and other necessary things here, or the kingdom of God hereafter. It is not thus cast,—in the one balance, the present life and its accommodations; in the other, the life to come, and God's kingdom. Indeed, if it were so, without all controversy, this

kingdom would carry it. I say, if there were an inconsistency supposed between a life here, and a life hereafter; suppose no man can be godly, except he be miserable, poor, naked, afflicted, extremely indigent, yet I say, the balance thus cast, would be clear to all men that judged aright: Would not eternity weigh down time? Would not an immortal soul weigh down a mortal body? What proportion would the raiment of wool, or gold, or silk have to the white and clean linen, the robes of righteousness, the robes of saints, and to the crown of glory that fadeth not away? What proportion would our perishing pleasures have to the rivers of pleasures, pure, unmixed, undefiled pleasures, at God's right hand for evermore? Would ye thus rate this present span, inch and shadow of time, if ye considered the endless endurance of eternity, I am sure reason itself might be appealed unto, though faith were not to judge.

Though it would hold well enough so, yet our Lord Jesus Christ states the controversy otherwise, and holds out another balance, that it may be the more convincing and clear, if it were possible even to overcome natural consciences with the light of it; and it is this,—in the one hand you may see food and raiment, things that belong to this life; and on the other hand, you may behold the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, grace and glory, and besides that, even all these other things, that ye did see in the other hand, food, raiment, &c., "all these things shall be added."

Wisdom in the Proverbs uses such a device to catch poor, foolish, and simple men: "Happy," says Solomon, "is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." Here is the weight of wisdom in itself: see how ponderous it is of itself; so heavy, that it may weigh down all that comes within the compass of desire, and cer-

tainly, its compass is infinite. But he adds, "Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her." She is a tree of life in herself, though she had no accession of other things, "and happy is every one who retaineth her," Prov. iii. 13—19.

Now, O men, if ye will not be allured with the beauty and excellency of the princess,—wisdom herself; then, I pray you, look what follows her,—that which now ye are pursuing after with much labour and pains, and all in vain too, is here in her train. Look how the comparison is stated: Christ Jesus would catch us with a holy guile; and if it had success, O! it would be a blessed guile to us. Ye have large and airy apprehensions of temporal things, which ye call needful, and ye cannot behold eternal things; ye know not the worth of this kingdom. Ye conceive that godliness is prejudicial unto you in this life; that the kingdom of grace will make you miserable here, and that ye cannot endure. Ah, be not mistaken; come and look again; if godliness itself will not allure you, if the kingdom itself will not weigh with you, then, I pray you, consider what an appendix, what a consectary these have. Consider that the sum is added to the principal, which ye so much seek after: but ye refuse the principal, the kingdom. Ye have not right thoughts of godliness; "for godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Now, is not this a faithful saying? If ye believe it so to be, "is it not worthy of all acceptation?"

Ye may have things necessary here,—food and raiment; and if ye seek more, if ye will be rich, and will have superfluities, then ye shall fall into many temptations, snares, and hurtful lusts which shall drown you in perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 8—11. Nature and reason might check such exorbitances, for nature is content with few things; therefore, believe "that godliness with contentment is

great gain." Ye are now only seeking temporal gain; but that is neither great gain, nor gain at all, when ye lose your soul, for that is an irrecoverable and incomparable loss. Ye may have these outward things—God's blessing, and peace with them, and heaven too, if ye choose this kingdom before all things, and above all things; but if ye give these other things the pre-eminence, it is uncertain if ye will get what ye seek, and ye shall certainly be eternal losers beside. If there were no more but this kingdom alone, it might weigh all down; if heaven and earth were laid in a balance, would not heaven, (if it were ponderous according to its magnitude), would it not weigh down the earth exceedingly out of sight? Would it not evanish as a point? Even so, though this kingdom of grace and glory were alone, in opposition to all these things that ye take thought for, it would weigh them down eternally. Look what the weight of glory was to Paul, when he says, 2 Cor. iv. 17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal."

The weight of glory is eternal, and far exceeds any thing temporal; the one scale of the balance goes up, as it were, eternally out of sight, out of thought; the one goes up for lightness and vanity, and the other goeth down for weight and solidity out of sight, and out of the thought and imagination. If ye looked upon these things which are invisible and eternal as Paul did, it would be so with you also.

But when withal the earth, and its fulness is in the scale with God's kingdom, and righteousness, will not these, with that accession, weigh down the earth alone? Is it food and raiment that ye seek? Then, I say, food and raiment is on this kingdom's side also; and ye shall be more sure of these things, because ye have God's promise for them. The wicked have not his word and pro-

mise for prosperity, even not so much as to answer their necessities, but only they may sometimes prosper in the world in his providence; but God's people shall have him engaged in their need for their temporal being here in this world. "O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," Psal. xxxiv. 9, 10. Godliness hath the promise of this life. Now, then, ye are more assured of temporal things by these means than any monarch can be. The world's stability depends only upon a command, but your food and raiment here is grounded upon a promise; and though heaven and earth should fail and pass away, yet not one jot of truth shall fail: God, indeed, may change his command if he pleases, but not his promises. Now, then, let all the world judge, come and see this balance,—how, on the one hand, food, raiment, and all things needful for this present life; on the other hand, these same things necessary for our bodies and well-being here, and that more solidly and sweetly flowing from God's love, grounded on a promise; I think this weighs down already, if we should say no more. But, then, behold what more is on his right hand; there is a kingdom of God beside, an eternal kingdom, and this weighs down eternally; all this world is but an accession and addition to it. The promises of this life are not your portion and inheritance; they are but superadded to your portion; so, then, we have as much beside an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," as the world have for their inheritance; yea, and more sure and more sweet beside. We might, with reverence, change that need which Paul has on this consideration, "If we had hope only in this life, we were of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. He speaks thus, because of afflictions and persecutions: but on this consideration we might say, If we have hope in Christ only in this life, we were not of all men most miserable, but most blessed; because we have all these things added to us, without

toil and vexation, without care and anxiety; by divine promise and providence, with God's blessing and favour; what the world take thought for, rend their hearts for, toil their bodies for, and yet are not sure of success, or if they get them, they get a curse with them.

Now, when the balance is thus presented, what is your choice? What will ye seek after? Will ye seek this present world, and lose the kingdom of heaven? Or will ye choose to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and then ye shall have in this world what is good for you? The choice is soon made in men's judgments; ye dare not any of you deny but it ought thus to be: but who seriously ponders these things till their minds affect their hearts? Who will sit down to meditate upon them, and pass a resolute and well grounded choice upon deliberation? Remember what Christ says, "No man can serve two masters." Ye may, indeed, have both these things, and the kingdom; but ye cannot seek them both, they are not so consistent; "but seek first the kingdom of God, and then all these things shall be given you."

Now, there is no more need of any second seeking, for "all these things shall be added" as an accessory to the first. O see then whose projects and thoughts are towards present things! Ye spend the prime and flower of your affections, and time upon them; ye cannot also seek the kingdom of heaven; unless ye seek them as if ye sought them not, ye cannot seek this blessed kingdom. If ye seek not this kingdom as the one thing necessary, and your seeking proclaim that ye account it so, ye do not seek it aright. If ye be careful and troubled about many things, ye proclaim that ye do not think there is but "one thing needful;" ye do not, like Mary, "choose the good part which shall not be taken from you," Luke x. 41, 42. If ye would abandon the distracting care of the world, and let all your anxiety and care vent itself here upon the kingdom of God, all these things would be added besides the kingdom itself; "seek the kingdom of God and his

righteousness." I conceive this is added to make us understand the better what it is, and what is the way to it. The kingdom of God is the kingdom of grace, in which he rules in us by his Spirit; for Jesus Christ is come for this end, and made grace to superabound over the abounding of sin, "that as sin reigned unto death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. v. 21, that as sin had a throne in us, so grace might have a throne, and subject the whole man obedient to that rule of righteousness that he here holds forth in his word. But this kingdom of God also includes the kingdom of glory, wherein those who overcome this world by faith in the Son of God, reign as kings set upon thrones with God the Father of all. Now, because the most part, when they heard of the kingdom of God, dreamed of nothing but a state of happiness in heaven, and passed over the way to it, which is holiness, and thought not upon the kingdom of grace, which is preparatory unto, and disposes us for the kingdom of glory; therefore, Christ exhorts us also to seek his righteousness, opposite to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, who satisfied themselves with a mere walk before men; this was man's righteousness, but not God's. This righteousness may be also opposed to the rags of our own righteousness, that we seek to cover ourselves with, Isa. lxiv. 6. The apostle says of the Jews, Rom. x. 3, 4, "for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Now here is the business, and I would have you to conceive it right: The gospel calls you to a kingdom; this is certainly more than all earthly kingdoms: But how shall ye come to it? Not at the nearest hand, no *per saltum;* no, believe it, ye must come and enter this way, before ye compass the end; and the way to this kingdom is by another kingdom, namely, righteousness: It is the king-

dom of grace within us; and the fruit of it is this, "deny thyself and follow me," Mat. xvi. 24, 25, 26; overcome yourselves, and your corrupt lusts, and "ye shall be more than conquerors." Kingdoms are gotten by conquest; but here is the greatest conquest and triumph in the world, for a man to overcome himself: He that rules himself and his own spirit, "is greater than he that taketh a city," Prov. xvi. 32. Other conquerors but overcome men like themselves, and yet are overcome by themselves, and their own passions, and so are but slaves indeed; but if ye deny yourselves, and resign yourselves to Jesus Christ, "ye shall be more than conquerors," Rom. viii. 37. This, then, is the kingdom ye must seek first; and it is the first step to the throne of glory. If ye would have a throne after this life, you must have a throne of grace in your hearts. If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed. They truly are kings who are most subject to God, above themselves, and free from the bonds of creatures; this is the glorious liberty of the children of God, to have liberty from him to make sin a captive. It is a righteous kingdom,—a kingdom of righteousness; therefore, ye must here study righteousness and holiness. "For the grace of God that hath appeared to all men, and bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world: looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," &c. Tit. ii. 11, &c. All men love the salvation it brings; but do ye love the lessons it teaches you? Ye would all be glad to have that blessed hope, and obtain the salvation which the saints look for, when Christ shall appear again in glory; but how few learn and practise what the gospel teacheth, to mortify and deny your corrupt lusts, and live daily in the practice of sobriety, equity, and piety! Oh if this were engraven upon your hearts, that ye might study that in this present world, which this precious grace and gospel teaches us to do in it! Know ye not, brethren, that all your pains in

seeking heaven, are not about heaven itself immediately, but the way to it, which is holiness, "without this no man shall see the Lord." Ye need not seek the kingdom of glory, hope for it, and look for it; but seek grace and righteousness in this world, and if ye obtain them, ye have not much to do, but to look for the blessed hope, and Christ's glorious appearance to judgment. For if ye have sought and got grace here, Christ will come with grace and glory at the day of his revelation. Will ye consider that ye are redeemed by Christ? But from what is it? from hell only, and eternal death only? No, no; for we are "redeemed from all iniquity," as well as the "curse of the law and the wrath to come," Matt. i. 21; Tit. ii. 14. This deliverance from sin is the greater and best half of our redemption. Consider also to what ye are redeemed: Is it to happiness and glory only? No certainly, but unto grace also; "For Christ gave himself for us, that he might purify us unto himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works." These things should ministers teach, and exhort, and above all things press them upon men's consciences. "We are redeemed from all our enemies to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life," Luke i. 74, 75. Yea, glory is not glory, except it be complete grace; so we must call the kingdom of glory. If ye believed that it was nigh you, ye would look then for the perfection of grace; and will ye not love the beginning of it here?

But this is not all; there is yet more here to comfort us; "seek the righteousness of God." There is a righteousness of God by faith, manifested in the gospel for lost sinners, who have nothing to cover them. Now I say, ye must so seek inherent grace, as ye may not make it your covering, and the only foundation of your confidence. Sinners, the thing which ye first seek and find, is to be clothed with God's righteousness, that he may see no iniquity within you; and then let it be your daily study henceforth to be adorned and made all glorious within, with grace and holiness. Ye must first renounce all your

own righteousness, and then be clothed with the robes of God's righteousness; ye must still renounce it, that grace may appear as the gift of God, and not yours; as his beauty, not your ornament. If ye be imperfect in your own righteousness, comfort yourselves in the righteousness of God made yours by faith, that worketh by love and purifies your hearts; for, says the apostle, Gal iii. 16, 17, though "we are not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ," yet we must keep ourselves from every wicked thing, and perfect holiness in the fear of God; for if, "while we seek to be justified by Christ, and we ourselves be found sinners," impenitent and impure, "Is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid."

XIX.

Matt. vi. 33.—Seek first the kingdom of God, &c.

It may seem strange, that when so great things are allowed, and so small things are denied, that we do not seek them. The kingdom of God, and his righteousness, are great things indeed, great not only in themselves, but greater in comparison of us. The things of this world, even great events, are but poor, petty, and inconsiderable matters, when compared with these; yet he graciously allows a larger measure of these great things relating to his kingdom and righteousness, than of these lesser things he hath promised to give his people, and he commands us to seek after these greatest things; "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

This, indeed, is most suitable to his majesty, and to us also; it is most becoming his royal majesty when he is to declare his magnificence, and to vent his love, to give such high and eminent expressions of it. A kingdom is a fit expression of a king's love and good-will. Kings

cannot give empires, unless they unking themselves; but Christ is the "King of kings," and hath prepared a kingdom for them that love him. It is a glorious declaration of God's excellent name, "that he is good to all, kind even to the evil and unthankful. His tender mercies are over all his works. The whole earth is full of his riches." And the wretched posterity of Adam have the largest share of his goodness, even since the first defection from him. Nay, but there are other things prepared and laid up for them that seek him; "O how great is that goodness! How excellent is that loving-kindness!" Psal. xxxi. 19, 20; xxxvi. 5, 10. These things have not yet entered into the heart of men to consider. If ye could speak the mind of it, then the tongue could express it; if ye could apprehend the wonders of it, then the heart could conceive it; but this the scripture denies, Isa. lxiv. 4, 'For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for them that wait for him." Or, as Paul writes, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God," &c. 1 Cor. ii. 7—14. Is not a kingdom a gift suitable to such a giver? And is not this kingdom of God every way like himself? These things are prepared by Christ, and there is no more to do, "but to give to him that asks, and he that seeks shall find" This righteousness divine human, is it not wholly of God's finding out? Is it so glorious, so excellent, as to hide the greatest spots of the creation from his spotless eyes? "For even hell itself is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering;" even the "heavens are not pure in his sight, he chargeth his angels with folly," Job xxvi. 6; iv. 17, 18 19; xv. 14—17. When all the creatures could not procure the salvation of sinful men, when the depth said, "it is not in me," and the sea said, "it is not with me," and the heavens and

heights said so too; even angels could not redeem us, the "redemption of the soul was so precious, that it would have ceased for ever," if divine wisdom had not found it out, and almighty power brought it to pass. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; but a body hast thou prepared for me: Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart," Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8; Heb. x. 5—11. All this was with God, and he knew the way thereof; Christ framed this royal robe of his righteousness, by suffering and death, which may cover all our nakedness. He came and sought the human nature with all its infirmities, "He became in all things like unto us, sin only excepted. On him God laid our iniquities. For he himself bare our sins in his own body," when he was slain upon the cross or tree, "that we being dead unto sin might live unto righteousness," 1 Pet. ii. 24; 2 Cor. v. 21. Behold what a wonder! Iniquities—and our iniquities, laid upon the immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ. Our Redeemer hid his divinity, his holiness, and his innocence, as a vail and covering from the eyes of God's awful justice; "He smites the Shepherd," his beloved Son, as he did the rebel creature: "It pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief, when his soul was made an offering for sin," Isa. liii. 4—11; Zech. xiii. 7. Justice did not look through the covering to his innocence, but reckoned and numbered him among transgressors, when he bore the punishment of our sins, and made an atonement for them, Isa. liii. 11, 12; Gal. iii. 13, 14.

Now, hence it is that the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which he earned in the days of his flesh, and purchased by his death, is prepared for us, to put on: "Whosoever will, let him come and take it;" empty yourselves, stripped naked of all kind of coverings, but sin and unworthiness, that which God's holy eye cannot behold, and seek Christ's righteousness to adorn and cover you; behold it shall hide all your sins and abominations, of whatsoever nature and degree, from the pure and unspotted eyes of

God's justice, which are as a flaming fire, to consume what it cannot look upon without abhorrence. Put on this righteousness of God, and justice shall not draw by the covering, to look under it. It shall look upon the sinner as a righteous man, on the slave of Satan as a child of God, on the heir of hell as the heir of heaven. If he sincerely repent of, and forsake his sins, believe in Christ and obey his gospel, "behold all things are new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled the world unto himself by Jesus Christ," &c. 2 Cor. v. 17, 18, 19; Col. i. 19—24. Christ was no worse dealt with for our sins, than we shall be well dealt with for his righteousness. This is the gift of God, and is it not worthy to be sought? Is it not a gift worthy for him to give? Is it not also suitable for us to ask? "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," &c. John iv. 10—15. So say I to you; If ye knew the gift of God, what this kingdom is; what this righteousness is; and who is appointed by God to be the treasure-house of all fulness, to be communicated to us; ye would certainly ask of him the water of life; ye would surely seek this kingdom of God and his righteousness. He doth not value other things; God only hath these things offered in the gospel, in choice of many; therefore are they laid up for some few, whom he makes his peculiar treasure, and jewels, Mal. iii. 17; Exod. xix. 5, 6. If ye knew a monarch that was a possessor of all this habitable world, and was about to express his singular affection towards some persons; if his kingdom or the half or whole of it was not sufficient to be a token of it, but he had found out some other thing, and laid it up for him, and distributed the kingdom, the lands, and cities among others; certainly ye would think that behoved to be some strange thing of great price. If the Lord was pleased to give you abundance of all things here, make you all great, rich, and honourable persons, then many would seek no other expression of his love, they would

think he did well enough to them. But alas, what is it all! he esteems it so little, that he often casts it to swine, —the profane and wicked world, "He fills their belly with his hid treasure," Psal. xvii. 14. "He makes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall on the evil and the good," Matt. v. 55. It is a demonstration that it is but a base thing, when it is so common; I mean, in comparison of the portion of his saints; for though these worldly things are good in themselves, yet they are not precious, they are not pearls. Would he cast pearls before dogs and swine? The honourable man's brutishness and ignorance of God, may demonstrate to you he cares not for it. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will," and sometimes "setteth up over it the basest of men," Dan iv. 13—18. If God loved riches well, do ye think he would give them so liberally, and heap them up upon some base covetous wretches? Surely no; but here is the precious thing that is laid up and treasured, the world and its gain seems great, and big in your eyes; ye cannot imagine more, nor wish for more. But, alas! how low and base spirits have ye! it is but as the dunghill that the swine feed on, or the husks which the prodigal desired to feed his belly with, when he began to be in want, Luke xv. 13—17. So are all men's worldly pleasures, preferments, and profits. But here are some particular things, that only deserve to be called good, namely, "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" and when God had searched the whole world (to speak with reverence of his glorious majesty, who needs not enquire into secret things) when he had looked through all the works of his hand he sets these apart from all the rest to be given to the men whom the king shall honour. This kingdom is the substance, and accomplishment of Heaven's eternal counsel, and purpose of grace, which was given in Christ before the world, and it is the end of the Son's redemption of a sinful world, and his intercession for them at God's right hand. "Father," says he, John xvii. 24, "I will that those whom thou hast given me,

be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me;" and for other things he makes them as the stones of the field.

Now, I say, as this kingdom of God, and his righteousness, are suitable expressions of his love, according to his magnificence, so they are also suited to our condition and necessities. No question but he would permit us to seek great things in this world, if these things were really great and good, and if they did become such great immortal spirits as we have. Your souls are above all these things; but this kingdom, and this only, is above the soul. Now, then, if ye go out to seek these earthly things, ye must go down from the throne of eminency that God hath set your souls upon by creation, and abuse your spirits by stooping to the very dust of your feet, to embrace these things; and, which is worse, ye put yourselves out of that high throne of dignity that ye are exalted to by Christ's redemption, which we may call a second creation. Jesus declared by the infinite ransom he gave, "when he offered himself a sacrifice without spot to God," Heb. ix. 14, and "laid down his life for us," what the worth of your souls was. "None of them," saith the Psalmist, "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever," Psal. xlix. 6—10. Call and assemble all the creatures in heaven and earth; summon gold, silver, precious stones, houses, cities kingdoms, places of trust and dignity, great learning and parts, and every other thing ye can imagine, let them all convene in a parliament, and consult how men shall be ransomed. All of them combined together, though they make one purse, cannot do it,—they cannot pay the least farthing. The Lord Jesus Christ then stepped in here, "Lo, I come," I give the body thou gavest me, my life for theirs, "I delight to do thy will, thy law is in my heart."

Are your souls then exalted to such great dignity! Is such a price set upon them, and will ye spend them for that which could not pay the price for them, "for that

which profiteth not?" Ye must go out of yourselves to seek happiness. Then I pray you, go not downward; it is not there, but misery is there; and by going down to the creatures, ye have found it, and cannot lose it to this day. But the kingdom of God is the only thing above; go up to it, "Seek those things that are above," Col. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "If then ye be risen with Christ," through the faith of God's operation, "set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth at God's right hand, and not on things on the earth." These things are but great in your apprehension; if they are at all great indeed, it is only in evil. If then ye seek great things for yourselves, ye may find evil things; ye shall certainly find such evil things, as shall drown you in everlasting destruction. "They that will be rich (in worldly things), who lay up treasures for themselves, and are not rich towards God, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Great things in this world are not always good; to seek them, makes them certainly evil and hurtful; it is not so hurtful to have them, though very dangerous; but it is hurtful, yea present ruin, to seek: But here is a kingdom that is great, and great in goodness, every way answerable to our necessities, this is the kingdom we should seek above all things.

We would therefore beseech you to be wanters in yourselves, and seekers in Christ; and seekers ye cannot be, till ye be wanters; and finders ye cannot be, except, if ye seek in Jesus all satisfaction and remedy of your necessity. This is even the very nature of a Christian, his chief exercise and employment. What then is a Christian's principal study, his great business, his important calling, and what is his success in it? He is a seeker by his employment or calling here, and he shall certainly find what he asks. But what puts him to seeking?

—the discovery of his own emptiness, and God's fulness. Therefore study these things most, if ye would be Christians in truth and in deed. It is these two that ye must still pass between; if ye keep them not both in your view at once, ye cannot well perceive any of them, either comfortably, humbly, or profitably.

This is even the sum of Christianity; look what ye want in yourselves, and make up that in God; discover your own emptiness and fill it up with God's fulness. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself, Prov. xi. 25. Be not niggards here, be liberally minded, both in seeking and receiving; so shall ye please him best who counts it his glory to give: "The instruments of the churl are evil, but the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand," Isa. xxxiii. 7, 8. Seek answerable to your own necessity and God's all-sufficiency, and know no other rule or measure.

Now, Christians, this is your calling and employment here, to be seekers of God's kingdom and righteousness. But shall we come speed? Yes, certainly; it is so far put out of question here, that it needs not be expressed: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be superadded to you." He thinks it needless to say, "and ye shall find the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" for it is supposed as a thing unquestionable, and he adds these words; "and all these things shall be added to you." to answer the faithlessness of those who could not credit him in temporal things, though they had concredited to him their immortal souls. Ye do not doubt then, but ye shall have the kingdom of heaven. Ye do indeed seek it. Many by seeking kingdoms lose here; by seeking to make them more sure, they lose the hold they have: many by aspiring to greater things, lose those things they have, and themselves too: But here is the man that is only sure of success, that may reckon upon his advantage before he take pains, if indeed he resolves to take pains for it. This one thing is made sure, eternal

life; if ye lay hold on it here by faith, and quit your hold of present things that end in death, Rom. vi. 21. We may well submit to the uncertainty of all other things, as David who held himself well satisfied with the "everlasting covenant God had made with him, which was well ordered in all things and sure," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Though the kingdom and house go, it matters not, if he keep this fast; if he take not away his loving-kindness, this is all my comfort, my joy, and my desire. Comfort yourselves with this, amidst the manifold calamities, and revolutions of times; ye see no man can promise himself immunity or freedom from common judgments. Here ye have no continuing city, why then do ye not seek one to come, and comfort yourselves in the hope of it? Your rights and heritable securities will not secure your lands and riches for any considerable time; therefore seek an eternal and sure inheritance, sure mercies. Seek that which ye cannot miss, and having found cannot lose; nothing here can you expect either to find, or keep when ye have found it.

But besides all this, there is an accession to the inheritance,—all needful things shall be added; ye shall want no good things, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. Will not all this double gain and advantage, recompense, yea, overcome all the labours of seeking? Shall it not drive away the remembrance of them? Here then is the most compendious and comprehensive way to have your desires in this life granted, to get your necessities supplied, "Seek first the kingdom of God," and ye shall have them; but if ye seek these things and not heaven, ye shall want this kingdom. I think then it is all the folly and madness in the world, not to take this way, for it is the way to be blessed here and hereafter; and if we choose any other way, it brings no satisfaction here, and it brings eternal misery hereafter. If ye would be well in this world, seek heaven; do not think that ye should have heaven, or seek God's kingdom from this sordid principle, that ye shall have all worldly things given you, which God pleaseth to bestow;

for no man can seek the kingdom of heaven aright, but he that seeks it for itself. Yet if there were no more to proclaim the madness of men, this would sufficiently suffice; all they can desire or expect is promised with the kingdom, and yet they will not seek it.

XX.

1 Pet. iv. 7.—But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

If ye would ask what ye should do till Christ come again, or what should be your exercise and employment in this old age of the world, here ye have it in a word, "be sober, and watch unto prayer." When Christ was to go away to his Father, and leave his disciples in this world, as he left them not orphans, or comfortless, without the Comforter, so neither left he them without counsel and direction; the word he left to them was, "take heed, watch and pray," Mark xiii. 33. In this chapter Peter is mindful of his Lord's direction, as Paul also was, 1 Thess. v. 6. The substance of this chapter is to exhort Christians to a holy conversation, suitable to their high calling. He presses mortifications in general, from that which should be of greatest force with a believer's heart,—the strongest and most convincing reason in the world,—union with Christ crucified, even as Paul does Rom. vi.; and then in the 3d and 4th verses, he argues from their former conversation: Ye have sinned enough already,—all the rest of your time is over little to consecrate to God; according then as ye have advanced Satan's kingdom while under it, so advance Christ's kingdom when it comes to you, and take that noble revenge upon yourselves and sins, so as to bring them both captive to the obedience of Christ. And although the world may think it strange ye walk not with them, yet so much the rather ought ye to aspire after a disconformity to the world. Be then ambitious of

being singular in the world. Ye would lay down such a conclusion as this, I am a stranger, and will walk as a stranger; and ye need not think yourselves miserable to be out of so much company, and to be alone; no, if ye knew what were to come upon them, ye would get you out from among them, lest ye be partakers of their plagues. The day of the Lord is coming, and the world must give an account to the Judge of all flesh: ye may endure their mockings, and all the hard measure which ye get here, for it shall be recompensed unto them. And your lot is the same that other saints had, who now sleep in the Lord; the gospel was preached unto them, and they had the same fruit of it before God, and got everlasting life by it; yet they were judged in this world as well as you, and were counted base and contemptible.

Now in this verse he comes to particular exhortations, from the former reasons. This text hath two parts, 1. An exhortation to some special duties which are so conjoined in this form of speech, that they seem all but one duty; prayer is the duty, and sobriety and watchfulness are means to it. 2. There is reason given, "because the end of all things is at hand;" so then ye have here the posture the world is in, and the posture a Christian should be in. This is the world's old age; it is declining; albeit it seem a fair and beautiful thing in the eyes of them who know no better, and unto them who are of yesterday and know nothing, it looks as if it had been created yesterday; yet the truth is, and a believer knows, it is near the grave, grey hairs are here and there upon it, though many know it not; and Jesus the Lord is at hand to put an end to it. Now, what should be your condition in the mean time? What should immortal souls do that are to remain for ever and outlive this habitable world? How should they be employed? The spirit and soul is to endure longer than the man's possessions, goods, honour, and place; how then should he look upon these things? Here it is; be sober in the use of all things, use the world as if ye used it not, watch unto prayer. Ye are encom-

passed about with manifold temptations, therefore watch, and be as men on their way waiting for the bridegroom. The bride's exercise since Christ ascended unto heaven, should be to say, "Lord Jesus, come quickly."

In discoursing upon this subject, we shall, 1. Speak of these three parts of a Christian's duty severally. 2. Consider how they help one another, and so jointly speak of them. And then, 3. Of the reason and motive to them all, and how it enforces such an exercise. As to the first of these we observe, That sobriety is a duty becoming every Christian that is united unto Jesus Christ, and is separated by God's holy calling from the rest of the world. I add these two considerations, because of the preceding verse; for in the first and second verses, he lays down an excellent ground of all kind of mortification, viz. the believer's union with Christ crucified. Jesus Christ suffered and died for us, as a common person, to sustain the guilt of our sins. He died as a cautioner and undertaker for us, and as our head and king, and we by virtue of that are obliged to crucify sin also. In verses 3d and 4th the other consideration is set down; there ought to be a vast difference between the believer now, and before his conversion; he should not be the same man, but as Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20; he should be separated from the world, that all the world may wonder at him, and think it strange to see his conversation. Now I conceive this exhortation is gathered from both these, and the word of reference, *therefore*, relates to the preceding verse, as well as his reason in the words now read, "now therefore be sober." This sobriety is not limited to meat, drink, or apparel; the object of it is more comprehensive in Scripture; it uses sometimes to be expressed singly, without making mention of any particular matter, evidently importing, that sobriety ought to be in all things; that which we ought to be sober in, is certainly the all things spoken of, in the reason of sobriety, whose end is at hand. They

are most distinctly expressed 1 John ii. 15, 16, 17. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," all that perishes, is not of the Father, but of the world; that is, the world which wicked men frame to themselves. Here then is a large commentary on all things. Therefore, whatever is in the world is the matter of sobriety, whatever comes under the senses calls for sobriety; whatever comes under the object of the mind is the matter of sobriety; nay, whatever is corruptible and perishing, or whatever the last day of the Lord's coming shall put an end to, in all these there must be sobriety exercised. There is a threefold sobriety.

First, Sobriety in the mind, or sober mindedness, Rom. xii. 3. "We ought not to think more highly of ourselves, than we ought to think, but to think soberly. 1 Cor. iv. 6, 7. Tit. ii. 6. Rom. xi. 20. 1 Cor. viii. 2. Sobriety of mind is that excellent lesson that Christ Jesus both taught, and practised in his humble state, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matth. xi. 29. Humility is not like Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord; Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." But humility is rather like Mary, that sat down at Christ's feet, and washed them with tears. Sobriety of mind does not undervalue God's gifts and graces, neither doth it overvalue them; it thinks of itself according to the measure of grace freely given, Rom. xii. 3.; and sobriety looks on all its own gifts and ornaments, as not its own but another's, as free gifts, and therefore it puffs not up a man against his neighbour, though he should see a gift given beyond his neighbour; high-mindedness is like the high bending of a string of an instrument, which easily breaks in two pieces. Sobriety walks with a low sail, and creeps through under the wind; but the high mind is like the cedar, that moves with the wind, and falls when the bowing twig stands still. Some will think the aspiring of the spirit a sign of a better spirit than the humble mind, and so look down upon others; but oh, if they walk safely, they will walk humbly with God.

Secondly, There is also sobriety in the affections, when they are moderate. The objects of this world which come under the affections, are either sinful and unlawful, or in themselves lawful and allowable: Now sobriety towards the first kind is simple abstinence; towards the second, moderation. The rule of the first is, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the mind, 1 Pet. ii. 12; and, as it was said in another sense, "touch not, taste not, handle not, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. v. 11. As a man who would be clean should not touch pitch, and he who would not be burnt, should not carry coals in his bosom, so should the child of God, who walked formerly in the lusts of ignorance, after the custom of this world, abstain from all appearance of evil, 1 Thes. v. 21; not only from sin itself, but from all occasions of it, and inducements unto it,—all that which hath any appearance of evil. There is no measure of moderation here; a man must not think to give his lusts part, and Christ part: No, he must have all or none; no quarters with sin; ye should be out of speaking terms with it: The least motion of the affections and heart that way, is insobriety, and inordinate affections. (2.) But sobriety in things lawful is moderation, when the spirit is kept within bounds, Col. iii. 1, 2; and the rule of this is that which Paul prescribes, 1 Cor. vii. 29, "Use the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of the world doth pass away:" Love this world as ye loved it not. Everything hath too much of the heart; and Jesus Christ would have his royal palace, his peculiar place, here; he may have suitable affections to God's dispensations in this world, for the Christian wants none of his senses, yet he ought not to be greatly moved, as David speaks, Psalm lxii. 2. Now we consider this in three things, (1.) In seeking of anything. (2.) In enjoying of anything. (3.) In losing or wanting anything. That rule of Paul's may be applied to all the three,—he should seek the world as if he sought it not; he should enjoy the world as if he enjoyed it not; he should want or lose

the world as if he lost it not. This sobriety makes him want in abundance, and abound in want; to have nothing, and yet possess all things. All our time and pains, and affections are spent out upon these. and turn about on these three points. Desire attended with care and anxiety goes out to fetch in anything that the mind fancies; when the soul hath gotten its desire, it delights and rejoices in it, and when it is frustrated, disappointed or crossed, it grieves and torments itself: If ye find a Christian sober in these, you find his pulse beat well. (1.) Ye should then seek the world or anything, as if ye sought it not. We are given to idolize the creatures, and dig broken cisterns, and forsake the fountain of living waters, to seek the creature as if it were God; and the strength of affections uses to be spent on it. Men having big and large apprehensions of the things of this world, are like foolish children amazed with pictures and dreams. Fancy busks up and adorns the object with all things suitable, and thus the poor soul is put in expectation of something. and stretcheth out itself to the utmost of its ability, to purchase that which being had, will not satisfy. The world promises fair to deluded minds that know no better; but the child of God must be sober here, he ought to have a low estimation of all created things, and conclude all under vanity and vexation of spirit. Luke x. 41, 42. Sobriety so seeks that it cannot want, because it seeks a better thing that it cannot miss; but the poor worldling seeks this world as his only thing, and if he want it, what hath he more? He must have it, or else he hath nothing; the child of God should seek as a rich man that is satisfied, and needs no more, that he cares not whether he obtain it or not: the worldlings seek it as their portion, their heart and affections are on it; but he seeks it not as his portion, but as accessory to his inheritance, Matt. vi. 33. Again we observe, (2.) That the good man uses the world, and enjoys it, as if he enjoyed it not; when riches increase, he sets not his heart on them: He is dead to the world, and crucified to it; it is but an un-

pleasant thing to him, and he to it. He can be refreshed with his meat more than another, because he sees God and his love in it; yet he hath it not as his portion, he is not excessive in gladness for any dispensation cast in the balance, one kind of dispensation or other; that which would make another man think he was half in heaven, or half in hell, will not add much moment and weight to such a spirit,—it is but like the casting in of a feather in a great balance, that will scarcely incline it to either side. (3.) He loses or wants the world, as if he lost it not; that which would break another man's heart, sobriety will make him go light under it, and not be much disquieted for anything; why, what is the matter of it? can it trouble his peace or access to God? Can his portion be removed? What then should ail him, for the light of God's countenance is more recompense than all the world. Proceed we now to apply this in some uses.

Use 1. It discovers unto the most of men how little they are advanced in Christianity: Many are insober in the use of the world; and what must their affections be? The works of darkness that become not the children of God, nor the children of the day, are yet common in the visible church: Insobriety in many is palpable, and written on their forehead,—that beastly sin of drunkenness abounds in many congregations. But, (2.) We would even convince the Lord's own children of great shortcoming in this duty. Although your carriage before men might pass free of censure of insobriety, yet O! how many things will God put such a construction on? There are many saints that cannot walk soberly in the use of this world; they spend their time upon it, and this is insobriety; scarce can prayer and communion with God get an hour in the day from their calling, and when ye have to spend, insobriety is written upon many passages of your behaviour. Your meat, and drink, and clothing should declare, that ye are waiting for a better inheritance; but oh! how are your affections wedded unto this present world? The current and stream of many of your thoughts goes this way:—What shall I eat or drink? Or what shall I put on for clothing? And

ye spend your spirits in projecting, and in following out your projects; there are some evident demonstrations of insobriety in the affections, for, (1.) Most of your thoughts run upon temporal things; and certainly if your hearts were not in this world, your minds would follow your hearts. Christians, too many amongst you spend whole days, and never any object enters into your minds, but one thing of the world after another; your minds are high ways for the travellers of this world to come through. It may be ye will steal an hour or half an hour for prayer, but the rest of your conversation is not in heaven, but void of God; according as every hour furnishes new opportunities, so are your minds here, Phil. iii. 20. And meditation upon spiritual things,—that is, the nerves and sinews of religion,—that is a rare thing. If your affections were not more upon this world, than upon Christ Jesus, would not our Saviour be uppermost in your thoughts? Would not Christ interrupt your thoughts of the world; would not heaven come in the midst of your business, and get a spare look and ejaculation? The world uses to interrupt your thoughts of God, and the mind is given to wander in prayer; but put you upon something temporal, ye can fix your heart as long as you please, and never wander: David was not so; he awaked, and was still with God, he meditates upon him in the night watches, he remembers him day and night, Psalm lxiii. 8, and this made him a lively Christian. But, (2.) If ye be seeking anything, ye seek it so, as insobriety is stamped upon it; your seeking of the world is prejudicial to your seeking of God, and takes away much time for prayer; ye will be as eager in the pursuit of a momentary passing vanity, as ever ye were in the seeking of God, Col. iii. 1, 2. Care and anxiety comes in to be your provision, and ye put not prayer in the place of it, to make your requests known unto God; ye seek it as if it were your portion and inheritance,—surely this is insobriety. (3.) Look upon your affections toward present enjoyments, and are ye sober? Ye can delight in these things, and take the sweet-

ness of them, but the consolations of God are a small thing to you; anything adds to your joy and lifts you up, albeit ye be not in good terms with God, yet ye can take your pleasure in the world: Ye see not a worm and moth in your pleasures; ye are not afraid to fill your belly with honey. Some think themselves made up when they get such a lot; but saints, are ye sober, when such a thing changes your condition? O but the children of God look upon this world as David did in his fretting condition, Psalm xxxviii. and in his prosperous condition, Psalm xxx. Ye sit down and say, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved;" ye have more delight in your outward lot than ever ye had in Jesus Christ. But, (4.) When any outward thing goes cross to your mind, then your insobriety appears: The taking of a sad and cross dispensation will evidence how ye sought the world; the taking away of a friend or idol, will declare ye idolized it. As the saints have too longing desires for the things of this world, and look upon them in the paradise of God, not as Paul did, who thought the world a dead thing; so remove anything that ye enjoy, and your joy is taken from you. Give something to pray, your sorrow is away and ye can no more mourn for sin; and take something away, and your joy is gone, ye cannot delight in God: Ye vex and disquiet yourselves in vain, and are weighed down with it. Are ye not then under the feet of this present world, when it tramples upon you? Are ye not servants unto it, when your condition altereth and changeth according to the nod of outward things? Ye may know what puts you up and down, that commands you, and this is not sobriety: Ye are drunk with the creature. The child of God should be like mount Zion, that can never be moved. Therefore,

Thirdly, We would exhort all the saints to study more sobriety in this world; we need no more exhortation than what Paul gives, 1 Cor. vii. 29. It is a strange language, saints; "Set not your affections upon the things of this earth, but on the things which are above," Col. iii. 1, 2. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world,"

&c., 1 John ii. 15—17. Ye ought to study such a walk abstracted from this world, that ye might be as strangers at home, as sojourners in your own country. The child of God should sit down in his own family, among his children, as if he were abroad: and he ought to be abroad as if he were home. Wherefore is your life called a pilgrimage, and ye strangers? Engage not much your heart to any thing of this world; take but a standing drink and be gone, ye may not lay down your staff and burden that his may bear you right. 1. Consider that insobriety is idolatry; insobriety puts the creature in God's place, and sobriety puts all things in their own place. When a man's heart or affections are set on any thing, that is his idol and his master; and Christ says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Matt. vi. 24, these two masters. Sure the worldling thinks not that he desires his riches, yet Christ puts that construction upon his loving them well. Christ calls any thing that is a man's master his god. Now, any thing that the heart goes after is a man's master; that which commands a man's affections, commands the whole man, for the affections are the man's master; and they command the man. If ye knew this ye would be afraid of spending your hearts upon vanity; ye put that vanity in the place of Jesus Christ, and so your heart is a temple of idols, and the great gospel-promise, Ezek. xxvi. 25, 26, hath not gotten place in you. The due place of the creature is, to be subservient to the Lord its Maker,—to be only the footstool, that he may have the throne. True, insobriety puts the creature upon the throne, and worships it. 2. Insobriety of love to the world hinders the love of God; as much as is added to the one, is taken from the other, 1 John ii. 15. If the love of the world have one grain weight of allowance more than Christ speaks of, that is incompatible with the love of the Father. The creature will suffer a parting of affection, and will be content with a share, like the harlot and false mother that would be content with the divided child; but God must have all or none, and will

not share with the creature; ye may find it by experience, when your hearts have been much set upon any thing in this world, Christ Jesus has not been so pleasant to you, ye have not so much delighted in him. Affection must run in the channel, or it is but weak, if once ye divide the streams, and much more here. The love of the world makes the heart carnal; it is the defilement of the whole soul, and a weight that easily besets us, that it cannot mount up in a cloud of divine affection to Jesus. Can the needle go to two contrary points both at once? Can it move to the north and the south at the same time? Such an opposition is there between the Father and the things of the world. If then ye turn your face on the creature, ye must turn your back upon God. Think not, Christians, to keep love entire to God, and to set your affections on the world. Solomon's backsliding had this false principle; he thought to retain his integrity, and his wisdom should abide with him, though he would try folly and madness, Eccl. vii. 23; but did he not grow more foolish? Did he retain his wisdom? Many have come down from their excellence by this presumption. 3. Insobriety is the world's sin; it is the sin of the days of your ignorance, when ye walked after the lust of the Gentiles; and it is a shame for a child of God to be so. This duty is opposed to their former walking, verses 3d and 4th. There should be a great distance between you and the world, that ye may seem men of diverse countries; though ye dwell in one city or in one house, ye ought so to walk as men may think it strange, as it may be a wonder in the world. O but few Christians give the worldly men occasion to speak of them for holiness; few give them any ground for wondering at and mocking their conversation. Your conversation is so like theirs, that they need not think any thing in it strange. Is it not a shame, saints, to be like pagans? Christ uses such an argument with his disciples to dissuade them from carnal carefulness, Matt. vi. 32. Sobriety is a work of the day, becoming a child of light, as Paul observes, 1 Thess. v. 4—9, importing as much as

if it were a shame for the Christian to be found much in love with the world, as it is for a man to be drunk at nine in the morning, and staggering in the streets. There ought to be as great a difference between you and the world, as there is between day and night, light and darkness. Since the true light hath shined, to discover a more excellent happiness than the world can give, and since it hath concluded all under vanity, ye are not answerable to your holy calling to have it in any higher estimation. Consider also, 4. That the world is not your portion: your life consists not in what you enjoy; your inheritance is above, reserved in the heavens for you; therefore be sober. If ye believed this, that one day ye shall put on white robes, and be clothed with immortality, would ye so pursue after the world? It is the world's portion; and let them who know no better seek it as their god, and love it as their inheritance; but fie upon believers, that have a hope laid up in heaven, and fixed as an anchor within the vail. Should ye cause your portion to be evil spoken of, by your groping so much after this present world? If ye walked right; ye should torment the world, and oblige them to be convinced that ye seek a city to come, and that ye despise all their enjoyments. But, 5. Insobriety becomes not a reasonable soul, and is very unbeseeming a Christian; even so is it to every man: "Are ye not better," says Christ, "than many sparrows? Is not the life more than meat?" Matt. vi 25; Luke xii. 23, 24. So we may say, Is not the soul better than the perishing creature? O! it is the disgrace and debasement of an immortal spirit to be put under the feet of a piece of clay, to be subjected to vanity, and to the poor perishing things of the world. If a man but knew himself, and his natural prerogative above the creatures, let be his Christian privileges, he would despise the world, and think all that is in it not a satisfying portion for his spirit: He would count it a great disparagement to lodge upon this side of infiniteness and divine fulness. Would ye not think it a base thing to see a king's son sitting

down among beggars, and puddling in the filth of the city. God made man to have lordship and pre-eminence over the creatures, and his spirit shall outlive all those things he sees, and looks to; and what a dishonour must it be to spend an immortal spirit on vanity, to have no eye beyond the span of time? As Christ said, "What hath a man gained if he lose his own soul?" What gain ye in this world, though all things should befal you according to your contentment; what gain ye since ye prostitute an immortal soul unto the service of the world, and have made the prince of the world and of all things, your servant and slave?

XXI.

1 Pet. iv. 7.—And watch unto prayer.

Watch. A Christian should watch; a Christian is a watchman by office. This duty of watchfulness is frequently commanded and commended in Scripture, Matt. xxiv. 42. Mark xiii. 33. 1 Cor. xvi. 13. Eph. v. 6. 1 Pet. v. 8. Col. iv. 2. Luke xii. 37. "David did wait as they that did watch for the morning light." The ministers of the gospel are styled watchmen in Scripture; and every Christian should be to himself as a minister is to his flock, he should watch over himself. This imports the Christian's condition in this world, and expresses his exercise in it. Watching is a military posture, and insinuates the Christian's case in this world: 1. He is compassed about with enemies, and therefore he must be a soldier, 2 Tim. ii. 4. "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The Christian hath a warfare to accomplish in this world, and therefore the church here is militant, and in heaven triumphant, 1 Tim. i. 18. Every Christian should "war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience." What is the reason that when Christ triumphed upon the cross, and conquered all his

enemies, and is ascended on high, that he hath not made all believers conquerors? Is the man that sits with Christ in heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6, and he who is dead with Christ, and also risen with him, is he yet a soldier when Christ hath overcome, and gotten the crown,—and the believer hath he not the victory that Christ obtained? Why then is he put to fight any more? hath not Christ completely done it? Yes, indeed, Christ hath overcome by his own strength, Col. ii. 15, and is now on high, yet he will have the poor pieces of contemptible clay to overcome the archangel, the immortal spirits. It was not so much for the prince Gabriel, the messenger of the covenant, the King of saints, to overcome his own creature; but he hath drawn out a battle and warfare to all his followers, that in the strength of their victory in him already past, they may be made more than conquerors; and there may be a perpetual song of triumph and victory in heaven, that he hath made the saints strong, and hath made the strong weak: "He hath set the poor with princes, and the kings on the dunghill." The Christian's heart and grace are like a besieged city, that is blocked up upon every hand; there are enemies without, and false friends within; its party is great principalities and powers, &c., Eph. vi. 13, and these go about continually to spy a breach in the city; what strength can do, what policy can do, will not be wanting; all things of the world besiege the heart, and every sense is a port [*i. e.* gate] to let the enemy in. All a man's negotiation and trade in the world is as dangerous as the proclaiming a public market in a town for the country, while the enemy is about it. There is a desperate wicked heart within, that hath deceived many thousands, and would surrender the city upon any occasion: "Here are fleshly lusts which war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11, temptation to sin, and to unbelief; there is a heart within that can conceive and bring forth sin, and needs no temptation,—a heart within that can seduce temptation itself; but he follows the tempter; and when, to all that, a foreign power is added, O then!

who can stand? Christ himself was tempted, but Satan found nothing in him, and had nothing in him; but when Satan comes he finds all in us, and we are like powder to conceive flame: we can even tempt ourselves, as well as be tempted by another. The Christian keeps a house that the enemy surrounds, and if he sleep he will enter; he is here a pilgrim, and is not yet come home, yet he hath a foul and dangerous way to go through. He is like a servant that his Lord hath left, and given provision to, and is to come home when he pleases, Mark xiii. 33; Matth. xxiv. 32. If his master find him sleeping, woe to him,—this is his case. What, then, should his exercise and posture be? He should be a watchman. (1.) Watching is opposed to security and sleeping, Matt. xxiv. 42; Mark xiii. 33; he must keep his eyes open, or else he is gone, 1 Pet. v. 8; be vigilant lest the devil attack you. The sluggard's destruction comes as an armed man, because of his little sleep and little slumber, Prov. vi. 10; xx. 13. Security is the Christian's night, when he ceases from his labour, and the adversary does with him according to his pleasure; but the Christian is in a better condition when he is wrestling with temptation, and getting sore blows; when he is at peace and dwells securely, as the people of Laish, and troubles himself with nothing, but dreams over his days,—but that is a decaying condition. (2.) To watch, is to observe all things, 1 Sam. iv. 13; Luke vi. 7. This is a special point of the watchman's duty,—to let nothing pass by without observation; whatever object would come in, ask at it, from whence, and whither. The heart is a highway-side that all things travel through; if the Christian then be not exact in this, to know what comes in, and what is its errand, he may be surprised ere he know. He should observe all the motions of the enemy, and be well acquainted with all the subtilties of temptations; he must know his own spirit, or his thoughts; he should also observe all the Lord's motions and dealings with his spirit. It concerns him also to

know what is his enemy or friend; therefore the Christian should get upon the watch-tower of the word, and look through the prospect of faith round about him, that he may know what his spiritual condition is. But, (3.) The watchman gives warning while it is seasonable, and the enemy far off; it raises the alarm, and all must be in readiness, so ought ye to be: come to Jesus Christ with all ye observe; inform the captain of your salvation, whose soldiers you are. It is best dealing with temptation far off, and resisting the first motions of sin; for when it comes near hand it gets many friends within, and it is the watchman's part not to give his judgment of what he sees, but to report only. Do not ye sit down to pass the sentence on any thing, whether it be good or evil, sin or not, but come unto Jesus, and let him speak, for oftentimes we reason according to flesh and blood. (4.) There must be no interruption in this watching; he must give diligent heed to it, Mark xiii. 33; 1 Thes. v. 6. It is a very laborious exercise for a Christian to watch; all his senses will be exercised by it; he must look up, and that stedfastly; he must stand, and when he hath done all to stand; when he hath overcome he must yet watch, lest he enter into temptation—he is in greater hazard after victory than before, Ezra vi. 13. He must watch when he is come out of one temptation, lest he enter into another. The greatest disadvantage that armies have gotten, hath been after some victory, when they were secure; therefore we ought to give all diligence and love not sleep, lest we come into poverty.

From what hath been said, we see how few are in a warlike posture against Satan; many serve under Satan's colours, and the strong man keeps the house; they watch not against him but for him,—they fight for him, and not against him. Do not many Christians in profession, even watch for their sin, how to encompass what they would be at? Many wait on all advantages to get their own heart's desires; they watch against God's word, to hold out conviction. These are the children of darkness, in

whom the devil reigns. We also observe from this, (2.) That even the children of God are seldom found watching, there is much woeful security among them ; and this is the universal complaint,—who of you walks as if ye were among enemies? Ye walk as if ye were in a peaceable city without gates, as the people of Laish, who dwelt securely ; ye have no friend in all the world, and yet what unspeakable negligence and sleeping is there among you ? The flesh is so weak, that ye cannot watch but one hour for Christ : And O ! but the intermission of one hour's watching hath brought down many strong ones This made a breach upon David that could hardly be made up for ever again. From the words, we observe, (3.) That prayer is a part of a good Christian's exercise ; we may be ashamed to speak or hear of this duty. It is true, indeed, our religion is all compendized in this duty, yet this duty is so little in practice, that our religion must be but little. We would then speak somewhat of prayer, and observe,

1. That it is the distinguishing character of a Christian in Scripture ; the child of God, and the man that calls upon God's name is all one, and the same thing. The wicked man's name is one that calls not upon God nor seeks him ; but the godly call upon their Maker, Acts ix. 14 ; 1 Cor. i. 2. All the saints in Scripture have been praying men. The wicked or natural man is not an indigent man ; he wants nothing, and therefore seeks nothing from God ; but the Christian is one who hath nothing in himself,—a beggar by birth,—one that is cast out into the open field,—and he is still seeking to make up his losses. Praying and wanting go hand in hand together. Prayer, then, is the first breathing of the new man ; what sign of life would ye know him by ? Motion is an infallible sign of life, and this is the motion of the new creature. Prayer is the stirring of the soul, and going out of itself for bread,—it is the sucking of the breasts of consolation ; grace turns a man's face God-ward and Christ-ward. 2. Prayer is the pouring out of an indigent

man's heart in God's bosom; it is the emptying of the soul, and the landing of it on God's lee-shore, Psal. cii. 8; 1 Sam. i. 5; Psal. cxlii. 2, &c. When a pious heart is overwhelmed and sore disquieted it prays; prayer emptieth the vessel, and brings the soul above the water again, —it is a present ease in the time of trouble. Care and anxiety of spirit plunges the soul over the ears, but prayer brings it again into dry land, Phil. iv. 6. Care burns and drowns a man's requests, but prayer makes them known to God in every circumstance of life. Therefore prayer is called a "making known our requests unto God," and "the lifting up of our souls unto God," Psal. xxv. 1, 2. But, 3. Prayer is the provision of a soul; for it is sufficient to do that which carefulness and thoughtfulness undertakes to do, and effectuates not, Phil. iv. 6. Prayer does all a man's business,—he lives by prayer, as "Paul lived by Christ living in him," &c. Gal. ii. 20; he lived the natural life of a Christian by faith; so David says, "I gave myself unto prayer:" he opposes this unto all that his enemies do against him. Not only doth it ease the spirit of the present burden, but prayer does all his business, because it puts it over into a better hand, viz. the hand of him "who cares for us," 1 Pet. v. 6. It is like a child who is under his father's tutory, and he does nothing himself, but all is done for him; and he needs to do no more but ask and have,—to seek and find, —to knock and it shall be opened unto him. Prayer hath the promise of all spiritual and valuable blessings; and the promise is true. 4. Prayer speaks a life of indigence and dependence in the creature, and also speaks out the attributes of God for the supply of all our need, sovereignty, bounty, and good-will in God; it is the travelling of the poor creature between his own emptiness and God's all-sufficient fulness. It acknowledges that he hath nothing, and that God hath all things he can desire to make him happy. Prayer is an act of homage and subjection to our Creator, and it is also an act of love and reverence; for prayer looks upon God as a Lord, a Father,

and a Master. 5. Prayer is the pulse of a Christian, and here ye may find him; if he be vigorous and frequent here he is well; a decay in this is a woeful symptom of a dangerous and dwining [*i. e.* declining] condition. This is the fountain of the Spirit of life, and the Spirit's breath; "for the Spirit helps our infirmities with groans which cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26, 27; and according as the Spirit of God dwells in a man, in as far is he a good Christian. If, then, ye would ask how ye should walk here, and thrive in true Christianity, we would only say this,—pray fervently and without ceasing; pray and prosper, and daily be strong, and the Lord shall be with you,—he will never fail nor forsake you. Again, consider, 6. That prayer is not so much a duty as a privilege; and if saints knew this, prayer would not so often be a burden unto them: is there any privilege like this? For prayer is an admission into the secrets of God; it is an emptying of the heart into his bosom; it is a great part of our correspondence with heaven; it is a swift messenger sent thither, that never comes back with ill news,—it never returns empty, but accomplishes its intent. Prayer is, as it were, speaking with God face to face, as a man speaks to his friend; and is it not an honourable privilege, that believers are admitted to him, and may boldly come to him under all their necessities, and have such a sympathising friend as Jesus? What is wonderful in scripture, that God hath put that honour upon prayer to be instrumental in obtaining the greatest blessings? Did not the Lord, at the prayer of Moses, dry up the Red Sea? Did he not, at the prayer of Elias, withhold and give rain? Did not the prayer of Joshua make the sun to stand still, till he had vanquished his enemies? Wherefore was all this? Ought he not to have done it unasked? Certainly, but the Lord would put that honour and respect upon prayer in all ages, that it might be a demonstration to all ages and generations, how ready and propense God was to hear prayer; nay, to speak with reverence, God will submit his own omnipotence to prayer. "Command, ask of me,

and command me," says the high and holy One, Isa. xlv. 11. O but "the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much!" James v. 16. It does a man's business, and upon less expenses; it gives a reward in the hand, and the hope of the things sought. Withal, prayer is like Jacob's getting that within doors, without much toil, which careful Esau goes about all the fields for, and toils all day to obtain. Prayer is the most compendious way of remedy of all things else; it always makes up losses either of the same kind or better; for if the loss be temporal, if the want be bodily, prayer makes it up with access unto God; it pays in gold; if it give not the same coin, yet it is better.

We have spoken something of prayer for this end, that your hearts may fall in love with it; it is the property of a sincere upright man, "that he calls always upon God," whereas the hypocrite will not always do it. Count, then, yourselves as much Christians as ye find of the spirit of prayer and supplication in you; for those that call not on God their portion is very terrible—God will pour out his wrath upon them: God's face is set against such as do not pray. And I believe the multitude of this visible kirk have this brand upon their face,—they call not upon God. God hath taken this character to himself,—"the hearer of prayer;" and those who mock at it, their judgment hasteneth, their damnation slumbereth not.

XXII.

1 Pet. iv. 7.—Be sober, and watch unto prayer.

We now come to consider the coherence and connexion these duties have one to another. Prayer is the principal part of the Christian's employment, and sobriety and watchfulness are subordinate to it,—"Be sober and watch unto prayer." (1.) Prayer is such a tender thing that there is necessity of dieting the spirit unto it, that prayer may

be in good health; a man must keep a diet and be sober, sobriety conduces so much to its well-being, and insobriety makes prayer fail: Prayer requests a wholesome Christian at his best estate. (2.) Because prayer that is well at itself must have much divine affection in it, that may be the wings of it to rise upon, the oil that may keep the flame, James v. 16. Now insobriety is the moth of divine affection; the love of this world eats out the love of God and spiritual things; as much as the one goes up the other goes down, like the contrary points, 1 John ii. 15. Vehement desires would be a cloud of incense to carry the petition up unto heaven; but the love of this world scatters it, pours water upon the heart, and makes it neither to conceive heat nor flame. "To be carnally minded is death." both here and hereafter, Rom. viii. 5, 6, 7. It is death to duties; it kills the spiritual life of the soul. Insobriety is carnal mindedness, and minding of the flesh; a man hath no more taste of Jesus Christ than the white of an egg: it quite distempers his taste, and makes that only savoury which is like itself, and all other things bitter. But, (3.) Prayer must have hope in it; for how shall a man pray, if he hope not to come speed? If he maintain not a lively hope, he will cool in his petitions: insobriety is not consistent with "hope to the end," 1 Pet. i. 17. He that would hope to the end must lift up his garments that hang aside, and take a lick of every thing by the way; he must not let them hang down, but gird up his affections with the girdle of truth and sobriety. We observe, (4.) That prayer must come out of a pure heart, and God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, John iv. 23, 24. 2 Tim. ii. 22. Insobriety makes an unclean heart, the lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world defile the spirit, and make it to send forth impure streams. (5.) There cannot be lodging for the Spirit where there is much love to the world; this grieves the Spirit, and makes him depart from us, and so a man is best to express his own groans, or to have none at all, which is worse. Where the "Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and the Spirit must have a clean house;

ye must touch no unclean thing, if you would have God to receive you into the holy adoption of his children. (6.) Prayer cannot thrive where faith is not in good condition, for faith purifies the heart which sends out prayer, 1 Tim. i. 5; Acts xv. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 22; and O, but insobriety makes an ill conscience! and faith and a good conscience scarce fall in one bottom, both fall and stand together. How, then, can the soul look that Holy One in the face, whose eyes are pure, and cannot look upon iniquity but with abhorrence? How can it look upon his holiness, when it hath been going a-whoring after the world, and forsaking the fountain of living waters? In a word, the heart that is not dead to this present world, will neither pray much nor well; for the heart is otherwise taken up, hath not many wants to spread before God, nor room for spiritual things; the creature gives him no leave to come to God. O, but communion with God is a tender thing, and subject to many alterations and changes of weather! A little more mirth than is needful will indispose us for prayer, a little more sadness than is within bounds will also indispose us for this duty. Carefulness and anxiety cannot pray; therefore it concerns all the saints to keep their hearts with all keeping, to "keep themselves unspotted from the world." If ye would keep yourselves in speaking terms with God, ye must not entertain the creature too much; any excess in your affections will divert the current of them, that they shall not run towards God. And next, ye see a solid reason why ye are so little in prayer, and keep not a praying temper, because ye are too liberal and lavish of your affections upon the world. Christians, how can ye pray, when your affections are upon the things of the earth? will ye seek heavenly things, or care much for communion with God, when a present world is so much in your eye? Prayer must be wersh [*i. e.* tasteless] and unsavoury when the world is sweet, and religion turns a compliment, when your hearts are here. Prayer is a special point of your conversation in heaven, and the love of this world keeps your hearts beneath heaven; your treasure is here, and

your hearts can be no where else willingly: Ye must then be mortified to the world before ye can pray aright. But we would likewise consider,

Secondly, That sobriety is a great furtherance to watching, and therefore they are usually joined together, 1 Pet. v. 8; 1 Thess. v. 6—9. This is clear, for if a man be not sober, but drink too much of the creature's sweetness, or bitterness, till he lose his feet, he cannot watch, and the enemy will make invasion when he sleeps. Sobriety is the mother of security,—a surfeit of any thing indisposes the body for any action. When the mind goes without the bounds of moderation, and stretches its Christian liberty beyond the bounds of edification, it cannot hold waking; a little sleep and slumber overtakes, till poverty and destruction come like an armed man. (2.) When a man hath drunk himself of the creature and hath his heart engaged to it, he is in an incapacity to discern a friend from an enemy; whatever comes in with his predominant or idol, will get fair quarters, though, it may be, it will betray him. The love of the world, when it stands sentry at a man's heart, will keep out true friends, it will hold out Jesus Christ and spiritual things, all that seems to come in contrary terms with itself, and will let in the enemy that will destroy the soul. (3.) Insobriety entangles a man with the snares of the world, and so he cannot be a good soldier of Jesus. I think the conjunction here is expressed more fully, 2 Tim. ii. 2, 3, 4. The good soldier of Jesus Christ, that wars a good warfare, must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life: He must be sober in the use of all things, or else he cannot be faithful to his Master; he will be about his own business when he should be watching; he will not only labour to please the Captain of his salvation, Jesus, but he has many other things to please besides; and if any of his too kind friends come to speak with him, he will leave his duty and go apart with them, the watchman's office will take him up nothing beside; but the insober man cannot give himself wholly to it, because his idols cry upon him,—he will prefer his pleasures before his

credit and honesty. Therefore, as ye would not expose your souls, and all ye have, to the will of temptation, be sober; the devil hath gotten his will of a man that he can force to lie down with the creature and sleep in its bosom. If once Satan can gild up the world in your eyes, and represent it amiable, and cause high and big apprehensions of it, O, ye are in the greatest hazard from the world of being overcome wholly by it; that was the temptation Satan sought to prevail with Christ by, but he found nothing in him. If the devil have taken thee up to a mountain to see the glory of the world, and make you fancy a pleasant life hereaway, take heed of it, for ye will drink drunk, and forget yourselves. and will not discern between good and evil.

Thirdly, Prayer must be watched unto; we must not only pray but continue instant in prayer, Rom. xii. We must "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Col. iv. 2; it is a strange expression, and familiar in scripture, Eph. vi. 18. O what a strange word is it! it is either very needless, or else imports the unspeakable necessity of prayer. Praying always,—what needed more? But we must pray "with all manner of prayer and supplication in the Spirit;" and more yet, watching thereunto; and to express the superlative degree of the necessity of prayer, he adds, "with all perseverance." Since the words at the first view do speak infinitely more than we practise, let many a Christian express their own practice, and set it down beside this verse, and blush and be ashamed; the most part of you behoved to speak thus, I pray sometimes morning and evening when I have nothing to do; and is this "praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance?" To watch unto prayer we conceive speaks these things,

First, To observe all opportunities, occasions, and advantages of prayer, to be glad of getting any occasion to sit down and pray; it is to seek out occasions and to be waiting for them. Too many use to excuse themselves easily that their other employments take them up; and they think on this account that they may omit prayer

with a good conscience, as ministers busied about their calling, and at their book, think it no omission that they pray not often; but, alas! is this watching unto prayer? Ye should be as men lying in wait upon some good opportunity to take hold of. Prayer would hinder no business of that kind, but much further it, prayer would be the compendious way of it. Ye use not to be challenged when ye get not a commodity to pray; but do ye seek opportunity when it is not offered? Do ye look after a retiring place, and withdraw from company, when ye cannot pray with company? This were indeed "watching unto prayer;" but watching unto prayer will make men sometimes uncivil (so to speak, that which, it may be, would be called uncivility); it will be a very pressing necessity that will draw away the time of prayer; no compliment would hinder you to go to it; if ye got a corner alone, that would invite a man that watches unto prayer, he even seeks it when he finds it not offering itself. The watcher unto prayer will steal much of his time from others, and other employments, and he will not spend time unnecessarily.

Secondly, To watch unto prayer, is to accept willingly of all occasions and opportunities offered. O! if such a man find a corner, but it will be seasonable and sweet unto him. If he have nothing to do, and knows not how to pass his time, then he conceives he is called to prayer, and to keep communion with God; but how many opportunities have ye, and what advantage make ye of them? Ye have time and place convenient, all the day or much of it, and yet ye content yourselves with an ordinary set diet; sure this is not watching. Watching unto prayer would make all emergent occasions welcome; ye would not have any impulse of the Spirit and motion to pray, but would ye follow it, and be led by the Spirit to your duty? Ye would not hear of any rare passage of providence, or any of God's dispensations towards yourselves, and other saints, but you would think it a good

call to pray, and make the right use and improvement of it.

Thirdly, To watch unto prayer, is to observe all the impediments of prayer, all the enemies of that precious thing—prayer, that ye ought to keep as the apple of your eye; whatever ye find by experience prejudicial unto prayer, mark that; what indisposes the spirit and makes it carnal, mark that; what fills you with confusion and astonishment, and what hinders the liberty of your delighting in God, and rejoicing in his promises, mark these and set yourselves against them. O but many Christians find liberal discoursing, and much mirth, prejudicial to the Spirit's temper; and yet, who watches against it?

Fourthly, Watch over your hearts, that ye may keep a praying temper, and be still in speaking terms with God. And if ye would still keep a praying temper, (1.) Be frequent and often in the meditation of God; keep yourselves in his presence as before him, that ye may walk under the sight of his eye. Psal. cxix. 168; cxxxix. 1—7. Stealing out of God's sight, makes the heart bold to sin; the temper of the heart is but like the heat of iron, that keeps not when it is out of the fire, or like the melting of wax: if ye be out of God's sight, your hearts will close. But, (2.) Let no object come through your mind without examination of it; let not your heart be a highway for all. If a good motion enter, entertain it, and let it not die out; give it up to God that he may cherish it. (3.) Repel not any motion of the Spirit, but entertain it. There are three things ye would watch over: As, (1.) Yourselves, your own hearts, Prov. iv. 23, &c.; ye must keep your heart, and it keeps all. (2.) Watch over your duty, Luke viii. 8. (3.) The time of Christ's coming, his second coming to judgment, Matt. xxiv. 42; Mark xiii. 31. So did David wait and watch till the Lord should return, Psal. cxxx. 5, 6. So did Job wait all the days of his appointed time, till his change came. Now, Christians, where are ye? Is not your practice your shame?

It is one among a thousand professors that can be noted for much praying. Who among you can get this commendation that the Holy Ghost gives to Anna: "She served God with fasting and prayer night and day?" Your morning and evening are the limits of your duty, and it is as almost an heresy to go beyond that. Is there any tender well-doing Christian in scripture, but he prayed much? This made David so exemplary; and hath not Jesus Christ "gone before you, Heb. v. 7, to lead the way?" O but Christ's praying so often in the days of his flesh, and "making supplication with strong cries," is a crying witness against the sloth of Christians in this generation; both people and pastor, how should ye be ashamed! Hath Jesus prayed so long and often, and should not the poor followers, indigent beggars, be all in supplication? The Christian should name himself as David did: "I gave myself to prayer." Many a man sits down to his employment and prays not much, because he hath gifts and abilities; but so did not Christ, who was able to save, yet he prayed and went about the Father's work with dependence upon him. And O that ministers would seek all from heaven immediately, and people seek it from heaven also! Think ye that the Spirit will take twice a-day for praying always, and set times for watching thereunto? No, no; we think there is little of this practised in this generation.

Now, we come to the reason that is added in the text, "the end of all things is at hand," that is, the day of the Lord is at hand: Christ Jesus, who was once here offered for sins, shall again appear without sin, unto salvation, unto them who look and wait for his appearance: and he shall put an end to all these things, either to themselves, by consuming them, or to the use of them. All that ye now doat upon is perishing, and it is not far hence that ye shall see the world in a flame, and all that ye spend your spirits on; and Jesus Christ shall bring salvation to his own saints; therefore, "be sober and watch." But how is it that the end is said to be at hand?

Are not many generations passed since this word was spoken? it is almost two thousand years since, and yet Peter spake of it, and Christ spake of this day as at hand, sure it must be nearer us now than it was then,—"The day of the Lord is at hand." (1.) Because, if we would count years as God doth, we would call the world but of one week's standing, for God counts "a thousand years as but one day," 2 Pet. iii. 8, 9. The world thinks he is slack concerning his promise, and asks, "Where is the promise of his coming?" But believers think not ye so,—reckon years according to the duration of the Ancient of days, and by faith see the Lord's day at your hand, as it were to-morrow still. But, (2.) It is not without special reason that the New Testament speaks of all the time from Christ's coming to the end as the last time, as it were but one age or generation immediately preceding the great day, as if the day of judgment were to be before this generation of the earth should pass. It is of great use to us, because the Lord would have believers, in the last age of the world, come to some greater pitch of mortification and deadness to the world, and hope of immortality, than has been come to before; he would have them as men waiting for the Bridegroom; and this their exercise,—every one in this generation standing with their loins girded, and their shoes put on ready for the journey, and their lamps in their hand, Luke xii. 37; Mark xiii.; Matt. xxv. He would have all walking as if the day of judgment were to-morrow; as if the King of saints were now entering into the city, and all believers should go out to meet him as their King bringing salvation.

This, then, is the posture of the world—all things are near run—"the fashion of this world passes away," 1 Cor. vii. 29; and the same exhortation is here pressed. This then, I say, is the state all things ye see are in,—it is their old age. The creation now is an old rotten house that is all dropping through and leaning to the one side. The creature is now subject to vanity and groaning, Rom. viii. 21, 22. The day is not far hence, that this habitable

world must be consumed; and O but many a man's god and idol will then be burnt to ashes! 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11, 12. —"the heavens shall pass away with a great noise," &c. God hath suffered men to live long in this world, that they might come to repentance, and he hath kept it so long for the elect's sake. If it had not been for them, the world should not be unburied till six hours at night; but when he hath gathered in all the election, then shall an end be put to all the administrations of kingdoms, all government, all nations. Think ye that God had so much respect to the world, or to the kings of it? No, he would put an end to all the kingdoms of the world, and never let them make their testament, if the elect were completed; if Christ were completed, there would be no marrying or giving in marriage, no more food and raiment, no more laws and government,—all your fair lands and buildings must go to the fire. Now, ask the question that Peter asks—"Seeing all things shall be dissolved, what manner of conversation ought ye to have?" And here it is answered—"be sober, and watch unto prayer." Ask at Paul, and he will tell you, 1 Cor. vii. 29—31, "The time is short; what remains then, but that they that marry be as they who marry not; they that weep as they that wept not," &c. So, then, here is the duty of those who look for Christ's second coming: Christ hath left it with you till he come again, and put an end to all things—"be ye sober and vigilant." But, 2. Consider what strength this reason hath to enforce this exercise, and how suitable this duty is to them who look for Christ's second coming. (1.) In relation to sobriety it hath a twofold force; for, 1. It is all the absurdity of the world, that ye should so eagerly pursue perishing vanities; that ye should fall in love with the old decrepit world that is groaning under vanity, and very near consumption. The day is coming that the soul shall see all these things destroyed to ashes; and what will it then think of this idol? This is the thing I lost my soul for, and it is gone; and O how tormenting a thing will it be

to the conscience! How have I been put by heaven for a thing of nought—for a vanity! Be sober, for the world cannot be a portion to an immortal spirit. Your spirit is immortal and will continue after these things are gone; and it will outlive this world. Your goods and good name—your pleasures and profits—your lands and rents—all will have an end; and your spirit shall continue after them. Why, then, will ye choose that for your portion, that will take wings and flee from you, or you will leave it, when ye see all burnt up; where, then, will your god and your portion be? 2. Christian believers, ye have another portion; for Christ, who comes to put an end to these things, shall appear in glory, and ye shall appear with him in glory. He shall come with salvation to you, Heb. ix. 28; Col. iii. 4. Your life shall appear with him, your inheritance is above. That sweet Saviour that came unto this world for saving lost sinners, shall come again, and will not think himself complete without you, and till he have all his members at his right hand. And, therefore, saints, be sober, while ye are in this world; ye need not any other thing in the interim but the hope of eternal life, to keep your hearts, and hold them up. O but ye will think yourselves will come to it, ere it be long; ye may laugh at the poor, blind, demented worldlings, who are standing in slippery places, and, like children, catching a shadow, or labouring to comprehend the wind in their fists. They are but dreaming that they eat and drink, and behold, when the great day of awakening comes at the resurrection, they find their souls empty, though, while they lived, they blessed their own souls, and men blessed them also. Your inheritance is above; and what need ye more that have such a hope? May ye not purify yourselves as he is pure, and purge your hearts from all corruptions, and use this world as strangers in your passage through it, that own nothing as their own? Ye have no property here, and therefore ye may the better live as strangers. But, (2.) In relation to watching, Christ Jesus is coming, and is near, therefore watch.

This Christ himself presses earnestly, "Be as men that wait for the coming of the Lord," since he is not far off; therefore, Christians, ye ought to be upon your feet, and not sit down with the creature; ye should entertain this hope of his coming, and comfort yourselves by it, and be kept at your duty by it. I may say, there is nothing that is less known among Christians. Christ and his apostles often pressed it, as it seems he would have it the one ever running duty, through all generations. Ye ought, then, to be ready for Christ's coming, and not be found sleeping. (3.) In relation to prayer; for "if the end of all things is at hand," and Christ will soon come again, then the Spirit's exercise, and the bride's should be, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Pray Christ back again, and say, "Why tarry his chariot wheels?" Pray him back with salvation, and hasten his return by prayer. He hath left such a dependent condition, left such an employment for us, as speaks dependence and necessity. This is the time of promises, and we ought to pray for their accomplishment. In heaven there will be no prayer, for prayer shall be swallowed up in praise, faith in vision, and hope in possession. But prayer is a duty suitable to the time, and to the Christian's minority,—to his banishment and sojourning. Dream not of an eternity hereaway; learn wisdom to number your days, and apply your hearts to religious wisdom; and if ye die thus, ye may rejoice that so many of the number are passed, and cannot return again.

A

TREATISE

OF

CHRISTIAN LOVE,

WHEREIN THE NATURE, PROPERTIES, EXCELLENCY, AND FRUITS OF THIS CHRISTIAN GRACE ARE DISTINCTLY EXPLAINED, AND THE CONSTANT EXERCISE OF IT ENFORCED FROM THE MOST POWERFUL MOTIVES; WITH A PARAPHRASE UPON THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS, DIVIDED INTO FIVE CHAPTERS.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—John xiii. 35.

First Printed at Edinburgh, 1743.

TO THE READER.

This treatise concerning Christian Love, was composed by the pious and learned Mr. Hugh Binning, who was minister of the gospel at Govan, near to Glasgow. He was much celebrated and esteemed in this church, for several practical treatises, frequently printed for the benefit of the public; but this is not inferior to any of them.

Though there have been many excellent discourses in late years on this divine subject, yet, considering that there never was a time wherein a treatise of this kind was more seasonable and necessary than the present, when the love of many, of too, too many, is waxed cold, and this holy fire is almost extinguished, this cannot be thought to be superfluous.

The author was a minister of a most pacific temper; and this amiable grace and virtue did illustriously shine forth in him: and in this discourse, he breathes with a spirit of love in the most affecting and gaining manner; so that, I dare say, that, though it be above ninety years since he composed it, it does not fall short of any performance of this kind that has since appeared in public. This treatise, with a great number of excellent sermons, preached by this able minister of the gospel, many of which have never been printed, in a manuscript in folio, was found in the late Rev. Robert Wodrow, minister of the gospel at Eastwood's library; and all care has been taken to publish it faithfully, without any alteration, either by adding or diminishing any thing from it.

This divine subject of Christian love he lays a great stress upon; he shews, that there is a greater moment and weight in Christian charity, than in the most part of those things, for which some Christians bite and devour one another. It is the fundamental law of the gospel, to which all positive precepts and ordinances should stoop. Unity in judgment is very necessary for the well-being of Christians; and Christ's last words persuade this, "That unity in affection is most essential and fundamental;" this is the badge that he left to his disciples: if we cast away this upon every different apprehension of mind, we disown our Master, and disclaim his token and badge.

Mr. Binning treats of this subject in a most sublime and pathetic strain; he explains the nature of this grace, discourses of the excellent properties and blessed effects and fruits of it, in a ravishing and captivating manner. There is such a variety of beauties in this treatise, that they deserve to be noticed in this preface; and particularly, his admirable commentary on the 13th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, wherein he outstrips all that went before him: and, in fine, he enforces the exercise of this grace with the most convincing arguments, and the most powerful motives. And now, not to detain the reader from the perusal, it is earnestly wished, that the end of the publication may, by the blessing of God, be obtained; which is, that Christians in our days may be as the primitive ones,—of one mind and of one heart, and that they may love one another with a pure heart fervently.

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

CHAP. I.

The beauty and excellency of this world consists, not only in the perfection and comeliness of each part in it, but especially in the wise and wonderful proportion and union of these so several parts. It is not the lineaments and colours that make the image, or complete the beauty; but the proportion and harmony of these, though different severally. And truly that is the wonder, that such repugnant natures, such different parts, and dissentient qualities, do conspire together in such an exact perfect unity and agreement; in which the wisdom of God doth most appear, by making all things in number, weight, and measure. His power appears in the making of all the materials of nothing; but his wisdom is manifested in the ordering and disposing so dissonant natures into one well agreeing and comely frame: so that, this orderly disposition of all things into one fabric, is that harmonious melody of the creation, made up, as it were, of dissonant sounds; and that comely beauty of the world, resulting from such a proportion and wise combination of divers lines and colours. To go no farther than the body of a man,—how, what various elements are combined into a well-ordered being, so as they may join in friendship and society, and make up one sweet temperament?

Now, it is most reasonable to suppose, that, by the law of creation, there was no less order and unity to be among

men, the chiefest of the works of God. And so it was, indeed, as God had moulded the rest of the world into a beautiful frame by the first stamp of his finger, so he did engrave upon the hearts of men such a principle, as might be a perpetual bond and tie to unite the sons of men together. This was nothing else but the law of love, the principal fundamental law of our creation—love to God, founded on that essential dependence and subordination to God, and love to man, grounded upon that communion and interest in one image of God. All the commandments of the first and second table are but so many branches of these trees, or streams of these fountains: therefore, our Saviour gives a complete abridgment of the law of nature and moral law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all mind; this is the first and great commandment: the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39. "And therefore," as Paul says, "love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 10. The universal debt we owe to God is love in the superlative degree; and the universal debt we owe one another, is love in an inferior degree, yet of no lower kind than that of ourselves: "owe no man any thing, but to love one another," Rom. xiii. 8, and that collateral with himself, as Christ speaks. Unto these laws all other are subordinate, and one of them is subordinate to the other, but to nothing else. And so, as long as the love of God may go before, the love of man should follow; and whatever doth not untie the bond of divine affection, ought not to loose the knot of that love which is linked with it; when the uniting of souls together divides both from God, then, indeed, and only then, must this knot be untied, that the other may be kept fast.

But this beautiful and comely frame of man is marred. Sin hath cut in pieces that divine love that knit man to God; and the dissolving of this hath loosed that link of human society,—love to our neighbour. And now all is rent to rage and distraction, because self-love hath usurp-

ed the throne. The unity of the world of mankind is dissolved; one is distracted from another, following their own private inclination, and inordinate affection, which is the poison of enmity, and seed of all discord. If the love of God and of one another had kept the throne, there had been a co-ordination and co-working of all men in all their actions, for God's glory and the common good of man. But now self-love having enthroned itself, every man is for himself, and strives, by all means, to make a concurrence of all things to his own interest and designs. The first principles of love would have made all men's actions and courses flow into one ocean of divine glory and mutual edification; so that there could not have been any disturbance or jarring amongst them, all flowing into one common end. But self-love hath turned all the channels backward towards itself; and this is its wretched aim and endeavour, in which it wearies itself and discomposes the world,—to wind and turn in every thing, and to make in the end, a general affluence of the streams into its own bosom; this is the seed of all division and confusion which is among men, while every man makes himself the centre, it cannot choose but all the lines and draughts of men's courses must thwart and cross each other.

Now, the Lord Jesus having redeemed lost man, and repaired his ruins, he makes up this breach, especially restores this fundamental ordinance of our creation, and unites men again to God and to one another; therefore he is our peace, he hath removed the seeds of discord between God and man, and between man and man: and this is the subject of that divine epistle which the beloved apostle, full of that divine love, did pen. "God is love; and in this was the love of God manifested, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, and he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; but we love God, because he loved us first, and if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," 1 John iv. This is the very substance of the gospel, a doctrine of God's love to man, and of man's love due to God, and to them who are begotten of God; the one declared,

the other commanded: So that much of the gospel is but a new edition or publication of that old ancient fundamental law of creation. This is that paradox which John delivers, "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which you had from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth," 1 John ii. 7, 8. It is no new commandment, but that primitive command of love to God and men, which is the fulfilling of the law; and yet new it is, because there is a new obligation superadded. The bond of creation was great, but the tie of redemption is greater. God gave a being to man, that is enough; but God to become a miserable man for man, that is infinitely more. Fellow-creatures, that is sufficient for a bond of amity; but to be once fellow-captives, companions in misery, and then companions in mercy and blessedness, that is a new and stronger bond. Mutual love was the badge of reasonable creatures in innocency; but now Jesus Christ hath put a new stamp and signification on it, and made it the very differential character and token of his disciples, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another;" and therefore when he is making his latter will, he gives this testamentary commandment to his children and heirs, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." New indeed; for though it be the same command, yet there was never such a motive, inducement, and persuasive to it as this: God so loved that he gave me, and I so loved that I gave myself; that is an addition more than all that was before, John xiii. 34, 35.

There is a special stamp of excellency put on this affection of love, that God delights to exhibit himself to us in such a notion, "God is love:" And so holds out himself as the pattern of this, "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love," Eph. v. 1, 2. This is the great virtue and property which we should imitate our

Father in. As God hath a general love to all the creatures, from whence the river of his goodness flows out through the earth, and in that, is like the sun conveying his light and benign influence, without partiality or restraint, to the whole world; but his special favour runs in a more narrow channel towards those whom he hath chosen in Christ: So in this a Christian should be like his Father; and there is nothing in which he resembles him more than in this,—to walk in love towards all men, even our enemies; for in this he gives us a pattern, Matth. v. 44, 45, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." To do good to all, and to be ready to forgive, is the glory of God; and certainly it is the glory of a child of God to be merciful as his Father is merciful, and good to all, and kind to the unthankful; and this is to be perfect as he is perfect; this perfection is charity and love to all. But the particular and special current of affection will run toward the household of faith; those who are of the same descent, and family, and love. This drawn into such a compass, is the badge and livery of his disciples. These two in a Christian are nothing but the reflex of the love of God, and streams issuing out from it. A Christian walking in love to all, blessing his enemies, praying for them; not reviling or cursing again, but blessing for cursing, and praying for reviling; forgiving all, and ready to give to the necessities of all; and more especially, uniting the force of his love and delight, to bestow it upon those who are the excellent ones, and delight of God. Such a one is his Father's picture, so to speak; he is partaker of that divine nature, and royal spirit of love. Gal. vi. 10. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in

love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you: To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father; at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints."

It is foretold by our Lord Jesus Christ, "that in the last days the love of many shall wax cold," Matt. xxiv. 12. And truly this is the symptom of a decaying and fading Christian and church. Love is the vital spirits of a Christian, which are the principles of all motion and lively operation: when there is a deliquium in these, the soul is in a decay. It is so comprehensive an evil, as alone is sufficient to make an evil time; and besides, it is the argument and evidence, as well as the root and fountain, of abounding iniquity, because this is the epidemical disease of the present time, —love cooled and passion heated; whence proceed all the feverish distempers, contentions, wars, and divisions, which have brought the church of God near to expiring. Therefore, being mindful of that of the apostle, Heb. x. 24, I would think it pertinent to consider one another, and provoke again unto love and to good works. It was the great charge that Christ had against Ephesus, "Thou hast left thy first love." I shall therefore shew the excellency and necessity of this grace, that so we may remember from whence we have fallen, and repent, that we may do the first works, lest he come quickly and remove our candlestick; Rev. ii. 4, 5.

CHAP. II.

1. It might endear this Christian virtue unto us, that God propones himself as the pattern of it, that Christ holds out himself as the rare example of it for our imitation. It is what doth most endear God to creatures, and certainly it must likewise appreciate them one to another; 1 John iv. 7, 8, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." Matt. v. 44, 45, "But I say unto you,

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Eph. v. 1, 2, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." John xiii. 35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Now, the following of so rare an example, and imitating of so noble and high a pattern, doth exalt the soul into a royalty and dignity, that it dwells in God and God in it, 1 John iv. 16. This is the highest point of conformity with God, and the nearest resemblance of our Father. To be like him in wisdom, that wretched aim did cast men as low as hell; but to aspire unto a likeness in love, lifts up the soul as high as heaven, even to a mutual inhabitation.

2. It should add an exceeding weight unto it, that we have not only so high a pattern, but so excellent a motive. God so loved; and "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" therefore, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 1 John iv. 9, 10, 11, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us," Eph. v. 2. Here are the topics of the most vehement persuasion. There is no invention can afford so constraining a motive,—Christ so loving us, that he gave himself a sacrifice for sin. O then! who should live to himself, when Christ died for others? And who should not love, when God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all? "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. viii. 32; v. 8.

3. Join to this so earnest and pressing a command, even the latter will of him to whom we owe that we are,

and are redeemed; that is the burden he lays on us; this is all the recompence he seeks for his unparalleled love, "This is my command, that as I have loved you, ye love one another," John xiii. 34. Your goodness cannot extend to me, therefore I assign all the beneficence and bounty ye owe to me, I give it over to those whom I have loved, and have not loved my life for them; now, says he, whatsoever ye would count yourself obliged to do to me, if I were on the earth among you, do it to those poor ones whom I have left behind me, and this is all the testimony of gratitude I crave. Matt. xxv. 34—40, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me:" "These ye have always with you, but me ye have not always." It is strange, how earnestly, how solicitously, how pungently he expresses this exhortation,—John xiii. 34, 35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another." John xv. 12, 17, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. These things I command you, that ye love one another." And his apostles after him, 1 Thess. iv. 9, "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

Colos. iii. 14, "And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." 1 Pet. iv. 8, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." But above all, that beloved disciple, who, being so intimate with Jesus Christ, we may lawfully conceive he was inured to that affectionate frame by his converse with Christ; and has been most mindful of Christ's testamentary injunctions; he cannot speak three sentences, but this is one of them. All which may convince us of this one thing, that there is a greater moment and weight of Christianity in charity than in the most part of those things for which Christians bite and devour one another. It is the fundamental law of the gospel, to which all positive precepts and ordinances should stoop. Unity in judgment is very needful for the well-being of Christians; but Christ's last words persuade this, that unity in affection is more essential and fundamental; this is the badge he left to his disciples; if we cast away this upon every different apprehension of mind, we disown our master, and disclaim his token and badge.

4. The apostle Paul puts a high note of commendation upon charity, when he styles it the bond of perfection; "above all things," says he, "put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness," Col. iii. 14. I am sure it hath not so high a place in the minds and practice of Christians now, as it hath in the roll of the parts and members of the new man here set down. Here it is above all; with us it is below all, even below every apprehension of doubtful truths. An agreement in the conception of any poor petty controversial matter of the times, is made the badge of Christianity, and set in an eminent place above all that the apostle mentions in the 12th verse, bowels of mercy, kindness, gentleness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Nay, charity itself is but a waiting-handmaid to this mistress.

But let us consider the apostle's significant character he puts on it: It is a bond of perfection, as it were, a bundle

of graces, and chain of virtues,—even the very cream and flower of many graces combined. It is the sweet result of the united force of all graces; it is the very head and heart of the new man, which we are invited to put on; "Above all, put on charity." All these fore-mentioned perfections are bound and tied together, by the girdle of charity and love, to the new man. When charity is born and brought forth, it may be styled Gad; for a troop cometh, *chorus virtutum*, a troop or company of virtues which it leads and commands. Charity hath a tender heart; for it hath bowels of mercies. Such a compassionate and melting temper of spirit, that the misery or calamity, whether bodily or spiritual, of other men, makes an impression upon it; and, therefore, it is the Christian sympathy which affects itself with others' afflictions. If others be moved, it moves itself through comfort and sympathy. This is not only extended to bodily and outward infirmities, but, most of all, to infirmities of mind and heart, error, ignorance, darkness, falling and failing in tentation. We are made priests to God our Father, to have compassion on them who are ignorant and out of the way; for that we ourselves are also compassed with infirmity, Rev. i. 6; Heb. v. 2. Then, love hath a humble mind, humbleness of mind, else it could not stoop and condescend to others of low degree; and, therefore, Christ exhorts above all to lowliness; "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." If a man be not lowly, to sit down below offences and infirmities, his love cannot rise above them Self-love is the greatest enemy to true Christian love, and pride is the fountain of self-love. Because it is impossible that, in this life, there should be an exact correspondence between the thoughts and ways of Christians; therefore it is not possible to keep this bond of perfection unbroken, except there be a mutual condescendence. Self-love would have all conformed to it; and if that be not, there is the rent presently. But humbleness of mind can conform itself to all things, and this keeps the bond fast. Then charity, by the link of humi-

lity, hath meekness chained unto it, and kindness; love is of a sweet complexion, meek and kind. Pride is the mother of passion, humbleness the mother of meekness. The inward affection is composed by meekness, and the outward actions adorned by gentleness and kindness. O that sweet composure of spirit! The heart of the wicked is as the troubled sea; no rest, no quiet in it, continual tempests rising, continual waves of disquiet. An unmeek spirit is like a boiling pot: it troubles itself and annoys others. Then, at length, charity, by lowliness and meekness, is the most durable, enduring, long-suffering thing in the world; "with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love;" these are the only principles of patience and longanimity. Anger and passion is expressed in Scripture under the name of haste; and it is a sudden, furious, hasty thing; a rash, inconsiderate, impatient thing; more hasty than speedy. Now the special exercises and operations of these graces are in the 13th verse, "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another," according to Christ's example. And, indeed, these are so high and sublime works, as charity must yoke all the fore-mentioned graces, unite them all in one troop, for the accomplishing of them. And the great and sweet fruit of all this is comprehended in the 15th verse; "The peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called in one body." Peace with God is not here meant, but the peace which God hath made up between men. All were shattered and rent asunder; the Lord hath by his Son Jesus Christ gathered so many into one body,—the church; and by one spirit quickens all. Now, where love is predominant, there is a sweet peace and harmony between all the members of this one body; and this peace and tranquillity of affection rubs and predomines over all those lusts, which are the mineries of contentions, and strifes, and wars.

5. Add unto this another special mark of excellency, that this apostle puts on charity or Christian love; "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," 1 Tim. i. 5.

If this were duly pondered, I do believe it would fill all hearts with astonishment, and faces with confusion, that they neglected the weightier matters of the law, and overstretched some other particular duties, to fill up the place of this, which is the end, the fulfilling of the law. It appears by this that charity is a cream of graces; it is the spirit and quintessence extracted out of those cardinal graces,—unfeigned faith, a good conscience, a pure heart. It is true, the immediate end of the law, as it is now expounded unto us, is to draw us to believe in Jesus Christ, as it is expressed, Rom. x. 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But this believing in Christ is not the last end of it: faith unfeigned in a Mediator is intentionally for this,—to give the answer of a good conscience in the blood of Christ, and to purify the heart by the water of the spirit; and so to bring about at length, by such a sweet compass, the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled by love in us, which, by divine imputation, is fulfilled to us. Now, consider the context, and it shall yield much edification. Some teachers, 1 Tim. i. 4, exercised themselves and others in endless genealogies, which, though they contain some truth in them, yet they were perplexed, and brought no edification to souls. Curiosity might go round in such debates, and bewilder itself as in a labyrinth: but they did rather multiply disputes than bring true edification in the faith and love of God and man. "Now," says he, "they do wholly mistake the end of the law of the doctrine of the scripture;" the end and great purpose of it is love, which proceeds from faith in Christ, purifying the heart. This is the sum of all,—to worship God in faith and purity, and to love one another; and whatsoever debates and questions do tend to the breach of this bond, and have no eminent and remarkable advantage in them, suppose they be conceived to be about matters of conscience, yet the entertaining and prosecuting them to the prejudice of this, is a manifest violence offered to the law of God, which is the rule of conscience; it is a perverting of Scripture and

conscience to a wrong end. I say, then, that charity and Christian love should be the moderatrix of all our actions toward men; from thence they should proceed, and according to this rule be formed. I am persuaded, if this rule were followed, the differences in judgment of godly men, about such matters as minister mere questions, would soon be buried in the gulph of Christian affection.

6. Now, to complete the account of the eminence of this grace, take that remarkable chapter of Paul's, 1 Cor. xiii., where he institutes the comparison between it and other graces; and in the end, pronounces on its behalf, "the greatest of these is charity." I wonder how we do please ourselves, as that we had attained already, when we do not so much as labour to be acquainted with this, in which the life of Christianity consists: without which, faith is dead, our profession vain, our other duties and endeavours for the truth unacceptable to God and man. Yet I shew you a more excellent way, says he, in the former chapter; and this is the more excellent way,—charity and love, more excellent than gifts, speaking with tongues, prophesying, &c. And is it not more excellent than the knowledge and acknowledgment of some present questionable matters, about governments, treaties, and such like, and far more than every punctilio of them? But he goes higher. Suppose a man could spend all his substance upon the maintenance of such an opinion, and give his life for the defence of it, though in itself it be commendable, yet, if he want charity and love to his brethren, if he overstretch that point of conscience to the breach of Christian affection, and duties flowing from it, it profits him nothing: then, certainly, charity must rule our external actions, and have the predominant hand in the use of all gifts, in the venting of all opinions. Whatsoever knowledge and ability a man hath, charity must employ it and use it: without this, duties and graces make a noise; but they are shallow and empty within. Now he shews the sweet properties of it, and good effects of it: how

universal an influence it hath on all things, but especially, how necessary it is to keep the unity of the Church.

Charity is kind and suffereth long μακροθυμεῖ, it is longanimous or magnanimous: and there is, indeed, no great, truly great mind, but it is patient and long-suffering. It is a great weakness and pusillanimity to be soon angry: such a spirit hath not the rule of itself, but is in bondage to its own lust; "but he that ruleth his spirit, is greater than he that taketh a city." Now, it is much of this affection of love that over-rules passion: there is a greatness and height in it, to love them that deserve not well of us, to be kind to the unfaithful, not be easily provoked, and not soon disobliged. A fool's wrath is presently known; it is a folly and weakness of spirit, which love, much love, cures and amends. It suffers much unkindness, and long suffers it, and yet can be kind.

"Charity envieth not." Envy is the seed of all contention, and self-love brings it forth. When every man desires to be esteemed, and would have pre-eminence among others, their ways and courses must interfere one with another. It is that makes discord: every man would abate from another's estimation, that he may add to his own; none lives content with his own lot or station, and it is aspiring beyond that which puts all the wheels out of course. I believe this is the root of many contentions among Christians,—the apprehension of slighting, the conceit of disrespect, and such like, kindles the flame of difference, and heightens the least offence to an unpardonable injury. But charity envieth not where it may lie quietly low; though it be under feet of others, and beneath its own due place, yet it envieth not, it can lie contentedly so: suppose it be slighted and despised, yet it takes it not highly, because it is lowly in mind.

"Charity is not puffed up, and vaunteth not itself." If charity have gifts and graces beyond others, it restrains itself with the bridle of modesty and humility, from vaunting or boasting, or any thing in its carriage that may sa-

vour of conceit. Pride is a self-admirer, and despises others, and to please itself it cares not to displease others. There is nothing so incomportable in human or Christian society, so apt to alienate others' affections: for the more we take of our own affection to ourselves, we shall have the less from others. O those golden rules of Christian walking! Rom. xii. 10, 16, "Be kindly affectionate one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. O but that were a comely strife among Christians! each to prefer another in unfeigned love; and in lowliness of mind, each to esteem another better than himself, Phil. ii. 3. "Knowledge puffeth up," says this apostle, 1 Cor. viii. 1, "but charity edifieth;" it is but a swelling and a tumour of mind, but love is solid piety and real religion.

Then, charity doth nothing unseemly, "behaveth not itself unseemly," 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Vanity and swelling of mind will certainly break forth into some unseemly carriage, as vain estimation, and such like; but charity keeps a sweet decorum in all its carriage, so as not to provoke and irritate others, nor yet to expose itself to contempt or mockery. Or the word may be taken thus,—it is not fastidious; it accounts not itself disgraced and abused to condescend to men of low estate; it can, with its master, bow down to wash a disciple's feet, and not think it unseemly: whatsoever it submit to in doing or suffering, it is not ashamed of it, as that it were not suitable or comely.

"Charity seeketh not her own things." Self-denial and true love are inseparable: self-love makes a monopoly of all things to its own interest; and this is most opposite to Christian affection and communion, which puts all in one bank. If every one of the members should seek its own things, and not the good of the whole body, what a miserable distemper would it cause in the body? We are called into one body in Christ, and therefore, we should look not on our own things only, but

every man also on the things of others, Phil. ii. 4. There is a public interest of saints' mutual edification in faith and love, which charity will prefer to its private interest. Addictedness to our own apprehension, and too much self-overweening and self-pleasing, is the grand enemy of that peace to which we are called into one body. Since one spirit informs and enlivens all the members, what a monstrosity is it for one member to seek its own things, and attend its own private interest only, as if it were a distinct body.

"Charity is not easily provoked." This is the straight and solid firmness of it, that it is not soon moved with external impressions. It is long-suffering, it suffers long and much; it will not be shaken by violent and weighty pressures of injuries; where there is much provocation given, yet it is not provoked: Now, to complete it, it is not easily provoked at light offences. It is strange, how little a spark of injuries puts all in a flame, because our spirits are as gunpowder, so capable of combustion through corruption. How ridiculous, for the most part, are the causes of our wrath? For light things we are heavily moved, and for ridiculous things sadly; even as children who fall out among themselves for toys and trifles, or as beasts that are provoked upon the mere shew of a colour, as red, or such like. We would save ourselves much labour, if we could judge before we suffer ourselves to be provoked: but now we follow the first appearance of wrong; and being once moved from without, we continue our commotion within, lest we should seem to be angry without a cause. But charity hath a more solid foundation,—it dwells in God, for God is love; and so is truly great, truly high, and looks down with a stedfast countenance upon these lower things. The upper world is continually calm and serene; no clouds, no tempests there,—no winds, nothing to disturb the harmonious and uniform motion: but it is this lower world that is troubled and tossed with tempests, and obscured with clouds. So, a soul dwelling in God by love, is exalted above the

cloudy region; he is calm, quiet, serene, and is not disturbed or interrupted in his motion of love to God or men.

"Charity thinketh no evil." Charity is apt to take all things in the best sense: If a thing may be subject to divers acceptations, it can put the best construction on it: It is so benign and good in its own nature, that it is not inclinable to suspect others. It desires to condemn no man, but would gladly, as far as reason and conscience will permit, absolve every man. It is so far from desire of revenge, that it is not provoked or troubled with an injury; for that were nothing else but to wrong itself because others have wronged it already; and it is so far from wronging others, that it will not willingly so much as think evil of them. Yet if need require, charity can execute justice, and inflict chastisement, not out of desire of another's misery, but out of love and compassion to mankind. *Charitas non punit quia peccatum est sed ne peccetur;* it looks more to prevention of future sin, than to revenge of a by-past fault; and can do all without any discomposure of spirit, as a physician cuts a vein without anger. *Quis enim cui medetur irascitur?* Who is angry at his own patient?

"Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity." Charity is not defiled in itself, though it condescend to all. Though it can love and wish well to evil men, yet it rejoiceth not in iniquity. It is like the sun's light that shines on a dunghill, and is not defiled, receives no tincture from it. Some base and wicked spirits make a sport to do mischief themselves, and take pleasure in others that do it. But charity rejoices in no iniquity or injustice, though it were done to its own enemy. It cannot take pleasure in the unjust sufferings of any who hate it; because it hath no enemy but sin and iniquity, and hates nothing else with a perfect hatred. Therefore, whatever advantage should redound to itself by other men's iniquities, it cannot rejoice that iniquity, its capital enemy, should reign and prevail. But it rejoiceth in the truth; the advancement and progress of others in the way of truth and holiness is its pleasure; though that should eclipse its own glory, yet it looks not on it with an

evil eye. If it can find out any good in them that are enemies to it, it is not grieved to find it and know it, but can rejoice at any thing which may give ground of good construction of them. There is nothing more beautiful in its eyes than to see every one get their own due, though it alone should come behind.

"Charity beareth all things." By nature we are undaunted heifers, cannot bear any thing patiently: But charity is accustomed to the yoke, to the yoke of reproaches and injuries from others, to a burden of other men's infirmities and failings. We would all be borne upon others' shoulders, but we cannot put our own shoulders under other men's burden; according to that royal law of Christ, Rom. xv. 1, "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves:" And Gal. vi. 2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;" that is the law of love, no question.

"Charity believeth all things." Our nature is malignant and wicked, and therefore most suspicious and jealous, and apt to take all in the worst part: But charity hath much candour and humanity in it, and can believe well of every man, and believe all things as far as truth will permit. It knows that grace can be beside a man's sins; it knows that itself is subject to such like infirmities: therefore it is not a rigid and censorious judge; it allows as much latitude to others as it would desire of others. It is true it is not blind and ignorant, it is judicious, and hath eyes that can discern between colours: *credit omnia credenda, sperat omnia speranda,*—it hopes all things that are hopeful, and believes all things that are believable. If love have not sufficient evidences, yet she believes if there be some probabilities to the contrary as well as for it; the weight of charity inclines to the better part, and so casts the balance of hope and persuasion; yet being sometimes deceived, she hath reason to be watchful and wise; for the simple believeth every word. If charity cannot have ground of believing any good, yet it hopes still: *Qui non est hodie cras magis aptus erit,* says charity; and therefore

it is patient and gentle, waiting on all, if peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, 2 Tim. ii. 25. Charity would account it both sin and blasphemy, to say such a man cannot, will not, find mercy. But to pronounce of such as have been often approven in the conscience of all, and sealed into many hearts, that they will never find mercy, that they have no grace, because of some failings in practice and differences from us, it were not insobriety but madness. It is certainly love and indulgence to ourselves, that makes us aggravate other men's faults to such a height. Self-love looks on other men's failings through a multiplying or magnifying glass; but she puts her own faults behind her back, *Non videt quod in mantica quæ a tergo est;* therefore she can suffer much in herself but nothing in others; and certainly much self-forbearance and indulgence can spare little for others. But charity is just contrary,—she is most rigid on her own behalf, will not pardon herself easily; knows no revenge but what is spoken of 2 Cor. vii. 11,—self-revenge; and hath no indignation but against herself. Thus she can spare much candour and forbearance for others, and hath little or nothing of indignation left behind to consume on others.

"Charity never faileth." This is the last note of commendation. Things have their excellency from their use and from their continuance; both are here. Nothing so useful, no such friend of human or Christian society as charity,—the advantage of it reacheth all things. But then, it is most permanent and durable: When all shall go, it shall remain; when ordinances and knowledge attained by means and ordinances, shall evanish, charity shall abide, and then receive its consummation. Faith of things inevident and obscure shall be drowned in the vision of seeing God's face clearly; hope of things to come shall be exhausted in the possession and fruition of them: but love only remains in its own nature and notion; only it is perfected by the addition of so many degrees as may suit that blessed estate. Therefore, methinks it should be the stu-

dy of all saints who believe immortality, and hope for eternal life, to put on that garment of charity, which is the livery of all the inhabitants above. We might have heaven upon earth, as far as is possible, if we dwelt in love, and love dwelt and possessed our hearts. What an unsuitable thing might a believer think it, to hate Him in this world, whom he must love eternally; and to contend and strive with these, even for matters of small moment, with bitterness and rigidity, with whom he shall have an eternal, uninterrupted unity and fellowship. Should we not be assaying here, how that glorious garment suits us? And truly there is nothing makes a man so heaven-like or godly as this,—much love and charity.

Now there is one consideration might persuade us the more unto it,—that here we know but darkly and in part, and, therefore, our knowledge at best, is but obscure and inevident; ofttimes subject to many mistakes and misapprehensions of truth, according as mediums represent them. And, therefore, there must be some latitude of love allowed one to another in this state of imperfection, else it is impossible to keep unity; and we must conflict often with our own shadows, and bite and devour one another for some deceiving appearances. The imperfection and obscurity of knowledge should make all men jealous of themselves, especially in matters of a doubtful nature, and not so clearly determined by Scripture. Because our knowledge is weak, shall our love be none? Nay, rather let charity grow stronger, and aspire unto perfection; because knowledge is imperfect. What is wanting in knowledge, let us make up in affection; and let the gap of difference in judgment be swallowed up with the bowels of mercies, and love, and humbleness of mind. And then we shall have hid our infirmity of understanding as much as may be. Thus we may go hand in hand together to our Father's house, where, at length, we must be together.

CHAP. III.

I may briefly reduce the chief persuading motive to this so needful and so much desiderated grace into some three or four heads. All things within and without persuade to it; but especially the right consideration of the love of God in Christ,—the wise and the impartial reflection on ourselves,—the consideration of our brethren whom we are commanded to love,—and the thorough inspection into the nature and use of the grace itself.

In consideration of the first, a soul might argue itself into a complacency with it, and thus persuade itself; "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love," 1 John iv. 8. And since he that hath known and believed the love that God hath to us, must certainly dwell in love; since these two have such a strait indissoluble connection, then, as I would not declare to all my atheism and my ignorance of God, I will study to love my brethren; and that I may love them, I will give myself to the search of God's love, which is the place, *locus inventionis*, whence I may find out the strongest and most effectual medium to persuade my mind, and to constrain my heart to Christian affection.

First, then, When I consider that so glorious and so great a majesty, so high and holy a one, self-sufficient and all-sufficient, who needs not go abroad to seek delight, because all happiness and delight is inclosed within his own bosom; yet that he can love a creature, yea, and be reconciled to so sinful a creature, which he might crush as easily as speak a word; that he can place his delight on so unworthy and base an object; O how much more should I, a poor wretched creature, love my fellow-creature, ofttimes better than myself, and, for the most part, not much worse! There is an infinite distance and disproportion betwixt God and man; yet he came over all that to love man. What difficulty should I have, then, to place my affection on my equal at worst, and often bet-

ter? There cannot be any proportionable distance between the highest and lowest, between the richest and poorest, between the most wise and the most ignorant, between the most gracious and the most ungodly, as there is between the infinite God and a finite angel. Should, then, the mutual infirmities and failings of Christians, be an insuperable and impassable gulph, as between heaven and hell, that none can pass over by a bridge of love to either? If God so loved us, should not we then love one another? 1 John iv. 11. And besides, when I consider that God hath not only loved me, but my brethren, who were worthy of hatred, with an everlasting love, and passed over all that was in them, and hath spread his skirt over their nakedness, and made it a time of love, which was a time of loathing; how can I withhold my affection where God hath bestowed his? Are they not infinitely more unworthy of his than mine? Since infinite wrongs hath not changed his, shall poor, petty, and light offences hinder mine? That my love concentres with God's on the same persons, is it not enough?

Next, That Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, who was the Father's delight from eternity, and in whom he delighted; yet, notwithstanding, could rejoice in the habitable places of the earth, and so love poor wretched men, yet enemies, that he gave himself a sacrifice for sin, both for me and others. O who should not, or will not be constrained, in beholding this mirror of incomparable and spotless love, to love others? 1 John iv. 9, 10, 11, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Eph. v. 2, "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour;" especially when he seems to require no other

thing, and imposes no more grievous command upon us for recompence of all his labour of love. John xiii. 34, 35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." If all that was in me did not alienate his love from me, how should any thing in others estrange our love to them? If God be so kind to his enemies, and Christ so loving, that he gives his life for his enemies to make them friends, what should we do to our enemies, what to our friends? This one example may make all created love to blush and be ashamed; how narrow, how limited, how selfish is it?

Thirdly, If God hath forgiven me so many grievous offences, if he hath pardoned so heinous and innumerable injuries, that amount to a kind of infiniteness in number and quality, O how much more am I bound to forgive my brethren a few light and trivial offences! Col. iii. 13, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Eph. iv. 32, "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." With what face can I pray, "Lord, forgive me my sins," when I may meet with such a retortion, "Thou cannot forgive thy brethren's sins, infinitely less both in number and degree." Matt. vi. 15, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." What unparalleled ingratitude were it, what monstrous wickedness, that after he hath forgiven all our debt, because we desired him, yet we should not have compassion on our fellow-servants, even as he had pity on us! O what a dreadful sound will that be in the ears of many Christians! "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all thy debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee. And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was

due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses," Matt. xviii. 32—35. When we cannot dispense with our pence, how should he dispense with his talents? And when we cannot pardon ten, how should he forgive ten thousand? When he hath forgiven my brother all his iniquity, may not I pardon one? Shall I impute that which God will not impute; or discover that which God hath covered? How should I expect he should be merciful to me, when I cannot shew mercy to my brother. Psal. xviii. 25, "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful." Shall I, for one or few offences, hate, bite, and devour him for whom Christ died, and loved not his life to save him? Rom. xiv. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 11.

In the next place, If a Christian do but take an impartial view of himself, he cannot but thus reason himself to a meek, composed and affectionate temper towards other brethren. What is it in another that offends me, which, if I do search within, I will not either find the same, or worse, or as evil in myself? Is there a mote in my brother's eye? Perhaps there may be a beam in my own; and why then should I look to the mote that is in my brother's eye? Matt. vii. 3. When I look inwardly, I find a desperately wicked heart, which lodges all that iniquity I behold in others. And if I be not so sensible of it, it is because it is also deceitful above all things, and would flatter me in mine own eyes, Jer. xvii. 9. If my brother offend me in some things, how do these evanish out of sight in the view of my own guiltiness before God, and of the abominations of my own heart, known to his holiness and to my conscience? Sure I cannot see so much evil in my brother as I find in myself: I see but his outside, but I know my own heart; and whenever I retire within this, I find the sea of corruption so great, that I wonder not at the streams which break forth in others. But all my wonder is, that God hath set bounds to it in me or in any. Whenever I find my spirit rising against the infir-

mities of others, and my mind swelling over them, I repress myself with this thought, "I myself also am a man," as Peter said to Cornelius when he would have worshipped him. As he restrained another's idolizing of him, I may cure my own self-idolizing heart. Is it any thing strange that weak men fail, and sinful men fall? Is not all flesh grass, and all the perfection and goodliness of it as the flower of the field? Isa. xl. 6. Is not every man at his best estate altogether vanity? Psal. xxxix. 5. Is not man's breath in his nostrils? Isa. ii. 22. And am not I myself a man? Therefore I will not be high-minded but fear; Rom. xi. 2. I will not be moved to indignation, but provoked to compassion, knowing that I myself am compassed with infirmities, Heb. v. 2.

Secondly, As a man may persuade himself to charity by the examination of his own heart and way; so he may enforce upon his spirit a meek and compassionate stamp, by the consideration of his own frailty, what he may fall into. This is the apostle's rule, Gal. vi. 1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, and pretend to it, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Do not please yourselves with a false notion of zeal, thinking to cover your impertinent rigidity by it; do as you would do if your own arm were disjointed: set it in, restore it tenderly and meekly, considering yourselves that ye also may be tempted. Some are more given to reproaching and insulting than mindful of restoring. Therefore, their reproofs are not tempered with oil, that they may not break the head; but mixed with gall and vinegar to set on edge the teeth. But whenever thou lookest upon the infirmities of others, then consider thyself first, before you pronounce sentence on them, and thou shalt be constrained to bestow that charity to others which thou hast need of thyself: *Veniam damus petimusque vicissim.* If a man have need of charity from his brother, let him not be hard in giving it; if he knows his own weakness and frailty, sure he may suppose such a thing may likely fall out, that he may be tempted and

succumb in it; for there needs nothing for the bringing forth of sin in any but occasion and temptation, as the bringing of fire near gunpowder. And truly, he who hath no allowance of love to give to an infirm and weak brother, he will be in *mala fide*, in an evil capacity, to seek what he would not give. Now the fountain of uncharitableness and harsh dealing is imported in the 3d verse, "If any man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Since all mortal men are nothing, vanity, altogether vanity, and less than vanity; he that would seem something, and seems so to himself, he deludes himself. Hence is our insulting fierceness, hence our supercilious rigour: every man apprehends some excellency in himself beyond another. Take away pride, and charity shall enter, and modesty shall be its companion. But now we mock ourselves, and deceive ourselves, by building the weight of our pretended zeal upon such a vain and rotten foundation, as a gross practical fundamental lie of self-conceit, of a conceit of nothing. Now the apostle furnishes us with an excellent remedy against this in the 4th verse, "Let a man prove himself and his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." A word worthy to be fastened by the master of assemblies in the heart of all Christians; and, indeed, this nail driven in would drive out all conceit. Hence is our ruin, that we compare ourselves among ourselves, and in so doing we are not wise, 2 Cor. x. 12. For we know not our own true value, only we raise the price according to the market, so to speak; we measure ourselves by another man's measure, and build up our estimation upon the disesteem of others; and how much others displease, so much we please ourselves. "But," says the apostle, "let every man prove his own work, search his own conscience, compare himself to the perfect rule; and then, if he find all well, he may indeed glory of himself." But that which thou hast by comparison with others, is not thine own; thou must come down from all such advantages of

ground, if thou wouldst have thy just measure. And, indeed, if thou prove thyself and thy work after this manner, thou wilt be the first to reprove thyself, thou shalt have that glory due to thee, that is, none at all; for every man shall bear his own burden, when he appears before the judgment-seat of God. There is no place for such imaginations and comparisons in the Lord's judgment.

Thirdly, When a Christian looks within his own heart, he finds an inclination and desire to have the love of others, even though his conscience witness that he deserves it not; he finds an approbation of that good and righteous command of God, that others should love him. Now, hence he may persuade himself, is it so sweet and pleasant to me to be loved of others, even though I am conscious that I have wronged them? Hath it such a beauty in my eye, while I am the object of it? Why, then, should it be a hard and grievous burden to me to love others, though they have wronged me, and deserve it no more than I did? Why hath it not the same amiable aspect, when my brother is the object of it? Certainly no reason for it, but because I am yet carnal, and have not that fundamental law of nature yet distinctly written again upon my heart, "What ye would that others should do to you, do it to them," Matt. vii. 12. If I be convinced that there is any equity and beauty in that command, which charges others to love me, forgive me, and forbear me, and restore me in meekness; why, then, should it be a grievous command that I should pay that debt of love and tenderness to others? 1 John v. 3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

In the *third* place, Consider to whom this affection should be extended; more generally to all men, as fellow-creatures: but particularly and especially to all who are begotten of God, as fellow-Christians. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and every one that loveth him

that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him," 1 John iv. 21 ; v. 1. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," Gal. vi. 10. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord ; my goodness extendeth not to thee: but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight," Psal. xvi. 2, 3. And this consideration the Holy Ghost suggests to make us maintain love and unity. Love towards these runs in a purer channel,—"Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto the unfeigned love of the brethren ; see that ye love one another, with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 22, 23. To be begotten of one Father, and that by a divine birth, that they have such a high descent and royal generation ; there are so many other bonds of unity between us, it is absurd that this one more should not join all. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one body, one spirit, called to one hope, one God and Father of all, Eph. iv. 2—6. All these being one, it is strange if we be not in love. If so many relations beget not a strong and warm affection, we are worse than infidels, as the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. v. 8, "If a man care not for his own house, his worldly interests, he is worse than an infidel ;" for they have a natural affection. Sure, then, this more excellent nature, a divine nature, we are partakers of, cannot want affection suitable to its nature. Christianity is a fraternity, a brotherhood, that should overpower all relations, bring down him of high degree, and exalt him of low degree: it should level all ranks, in this one respect, unto the rule of charity and love. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile ; there all differences of tongues and nations are drowned in this interest of Christ, Col. iii. 11. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes," Luke x. 21. And God hath chosen the weak and foolish to confound the mighty and

wise, 1 Cor. i. 27. Behold all these outward privileges buried in the depths and riches of God's grace and mercy. Are we not all called to one high calling? Our common station is to war under Christ's banner against sin and Satan. Why, then, do we leave our station, forget our callings, and neglect that employment which concerns us all; and fall at odds with our fellow-soldiers, and bite and devour one another? Doth not this give advantage to our common enemies? While we consume the edge of our zeal and strength of our spirits one upon another, they must needs be blunted and weakened towards our deadly enemies. If our brother be represented unto us under the covering of many faults, failings, and such like; if we can behold nothing but spots on his outside, while we judge after some outward appearance, then, I say, we ought to consider him again under another notion and relation, as he stands in Christ's account; as he is radically and virtually of that seed, which hath more real worth in it than all worldly privileges and dignities. Consider him as he once shall be, when mortality shall be put off; learn to strip him naked of all infirmities in thy consideration, and imagine him to be clothed with immortality and glory; think how thou wouldest then love him. If either thou unclothe him of his infirmities, and consider him as vested now with the robe of Christ's righteousness, and all glorious within, or adorned with immortality and incorruption a little hence; or else if thou clothe thyself with such infirmities as thou seest in him, and consider that thou art not less subject to failing, and compassed with infirmity; then thou shalt put on, and keep on, that bond of perfection,—charity.

Lastly, Let us consider the excellent nature of charity, and how it is interested in, and interwoven with all the royal and divine gifts and privileges of a Christian; all of them are not ashamed of kindred and cognation with charity. Is not the calling and profession of a Christian honourable? Sure to any believing soul, it is above a monarchy; for it includes an anointing both to

a royal and priestly office, and carries a title to a kingdom incorruptible and undefiled. Well, then, charity is the symbol and badge of this profession—John xiii. 35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Then, what is comparable to communion with God, and dwelling in him? Shall God, indeed, dwell with men? said Solomon. That exalts the soul to a royalty, and elevates it above mortality: *Quam contempta res est homo si supra humana se non exerat;* how base and contemptible a thing is man, except he lift up his head above human things to heavenly and divine. And, then, is the soul truly magnified while it is ascending up to its own element, a divine nature? What more gracious than this, for a soul to dwell in God, and what more gracious than this, God to dwell in the soul? *Charitas te domum Domini facit, et Dominum domum tibi; felix artifex charitas quae conditori sui domum fabricare potest;* love makes the soul a house for the Lord, and makes the Lord a house to the soul; happy artificer that can build an house for its master. Love bringeth Him who is the chief of ten thousand, into the chambers of the heart, it lays him all night between its breasts; and is still emptying itself of all superfluity of naughtiness, and purging out all vanity and filthiness, that there may be more room for his Majesty. And then, love dwells in God, in his love and grace, in his goodness and greatness, the secret of his presence it delights in. Now, this mutual inhabitation, in which it is hard to say, whether the majesty of God does most descend, or the soul most ascend, whether he be more humbled or it exalted; this brotherly love, I say, is the evidence and assurance of it. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us: "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 12, 16. For the love of the image of God in his children, is indeed the love of God, whose image it is; and then is the love of God perfected, when it reacheth and extends from God to all that is God's, to all that hath interest in God. His commandment, 1 John v. 3, "This is the love of God, that we

keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. 1 John iv. 21, "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also:" His children; 1 John v. 1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten of him:" His creatures; Mal. ii. 10, "Hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" The love of God being the formal, the special motive of love to our brethren, it elevates the nature of it, and makes it divine love; he that hath true Christian love, doth not only love and compassionate its brother, either because of its own inclination towards him, or his misery and necessity, or his goodness and excellency. These motives and grounds do not transcend mere morality, and so, cannot beget a love which is the symptom of Christianity; if there be no other motives than these, we do not love so much for God as for ourselves: for compassion interesting itself with another's misery, finds a kind of relief in relieving it. Therefore, the will and good pleasure of God must be the rule of this motion, and the love of God must begin in it, and continue it. And, truly, charity is nothing else but divine love in a state of condescent, so to speak, or the love of a soul to God manifested in the flesh; it is that love moving in a circle from God towards his creatures, and unto God again; as his love to the creatures begins in himself, and ends in himself, 1 John iii. 17. Is it not a high thing to know God aright? "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. That is a high note of excellency put on it, this makes the face of the soul to shine; now, brotherly love evinceth this,—that we know God. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love," 1 John iv. 7, 8. "When your fathers did execute judgment, and relieve the oppressed, &c. was not this to know me?"

saith the Lord. Jer. xxii. 15, 16. The practice of the most common things, out of the love of God, and respect to his commands, is more real and true religion than the most profound and abstracted speculations of knowledge; then only is God known, when knowledge stamps the heart with fear and reverence of his Majesty, and love to his name; because, then, he is only known as he is a true and living God.

Love is real light and life. Is it not a pleasant thing for the eye to behold the sun? Light is sweet, and life is precious,—these are two of the rarest jewels given to man. "Now, he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now, and knoweth not whither he goeth; because darkness hath blinded his eyes: but he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him," 1 John ii. 9, 10, 11. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death," 1 John iii. 14. The light of Jesus Christ cannot shine into the heart, but begets love, even as intense light begets heat: and where this impression is not made on the heart, it is an evidence, that the beams of that sun of righteousness have not pierced it. O how suitable is it for a child of light to walk in love! And, wherefore is it made day-light to the soul, but that it may rise up and go forth to labour, and exercise itself in the works of the day,—duties of love to God and men? Now, in such a soul there is no cause of stumbling, no scandal, no offence in its way to fall over; when the light and knowledge of Christ possesses the heart in love, there is no stumbling-block of transgression in the way. It doth not fall and stumble at the commandments of righteousness and mercy as grievous; "therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 10. And so, the way of charity is the most easy, plain, expedient, and safe way; in this way, there is light shining all alongst it, and there is no stumbling-block in it: for the love of God and of our brethren hath

polished and made it all plain, hath taken away the asperities and tumours of our affections and lusts; *complanavit affectus,* great peace have all they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them. Love makes an equable and constant motion; it moves swiftly and sweetly; it can loose many knots without difficulty, which other more violent principles cannot act; it can melt away mountains before it, which cannot be hurled away. Albeit, there be many stumbling-blocks without in the world, yet there is none in charity, or in a charitable soul: none can enter into that soul to hinder it to possess itself in meekness and patience; nothing can discompose it within, or hinder it to live peaceably with others; though all men's hands be against it, yet charity is against none, it defends itself with innocence and patience. On the other hand, "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, even until now:" for if Christ's light had entered, then the love of Christ had come with it, and that is the law of love and charity. If Jesus Christ had come into the soul, he had restored the ancient commandment of love, and made it new again: as much of the want of love and charity, as much of the old ignorance and darkness remains. Whatsoever a man may fancy of himself, that he is in the light, that he is so much advanced in the light; yet, certainly, this is a stronger evidence of remaining darkness: for it is a work of the darkest darkness, and murdering affection, suitable only for the night of darkness. And such a man he knows not whither he goes, and must needs incur and fall upon many stumbling-blocks within and without. It is want of love and charity that blinds the mind and darkens the heart, that it cannot see how to eschew and pass by scandals in others, but it must needs dash and break its neck upon them. Love is a light which may lead us by offences inoffensively, and without stumbling. In darkness men mistake the way, know not the end of it, take pits for plain ways, and stumble in them; uncharitableness casts a mist over the actions and courses of others, and our own too, that

we cannot carry on either without transgression. And this is the misery of it,—that it cannot discern any fault in itself, it knows not whither it goeth, calls light darkness, and darkness light; it is partial in judgment,—pronounces always on its own behalf, cares not whom it condemn, that it may absolve itself.

Is there any privilege so precious as this, to be the sons of God? 1 John iii. 2. What are all relations, or states, or conditions to this one,—to be the children of the Highest? It was David's question, "Should I be the king's son-in-law?" Alas! what a petty and poor dignity in regard of this,—to be the sons of God, partakers of a divine nature! all the difference of birth, all the distinction of degrees and qualities amongst persons, beside this one, are but such as have no being, no worth but in the fancy, they really are nothing, and can do nothing; this only is a substantial and fundamental difference: a divine birth carries alongst with it a divine nature; a change of principles, from the worst to the best, from darkness to light, from death to life. Now, imagine then, what excellency is in this grace; which is made the character of a son of God, of one begotten of the Father, and passed from death to life. 1 John iii. 10, 14, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." 1 John iv. 7, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." And truly, it is most natural if it be so, that the children of our Father love other dearly; it is monstrous and unnatural to see it otherwise. But, besides, there is in this a great deal of resemblance of their Father, whose eminent and signal propriety it is, to be good to all, and kind even to the unthankful; and whose incomparable glory it is to pardon iniquity, and suffer long patiently: a Christian cannot resemble his

Father more nearly than this. Why do we account that baseness in us which is glory to God? Are we ashamed of our birth, or dare we not own our Father? Shall we be ashamed to love them as brethren, whom he hath not been ashamed to adopt as sons, and whom Christ is not ashamed to call brethren?

CHAP. IV.

We shall not be curious in the ranking of the duties in which Christian love should exercise itself: all the commandments of the second table are but branches of it; they might be reduced all to the works of righteousness and of mercy. But, truly, these are interwoven through other. Though mercy uses to be restricted to the shewing of compassion upon men in misery, yet there is a righteousness in that mercy; and there is mercy in the most part of the acts of righteousness, as in not judging rashly, in forgiving, &c.; therefore, we shall consider the most eminent and difficult duties of love, which the word of God solemnly and frequently charges upon us in relation to others, especially those of the household of faith.

I conceive we would labour to enforce upon our hearts, and persuade our souls to a love of all men, by often ruminating upon the words of the apostle, which enjoin us to abound in love towards all men, 1 Thes. iii. 12, and this is so concerning, that he prays earnestly, that the Lord would make them increase in it; and this we should pray for too. An affectionate disposition towards our common nature is not a common thing; Christianity enjoins it, and its only true humanity, Luke vi. 36, 37, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." Now, in relation to all men, charity hath an engagement upon it to pray for all sorts of men, from that apostolic command, 1 Tim. i. 1, "I exhort, therefore,

that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." Prayers and supplications, earnest prayers out of affection should be poured out, even for them that cannot, or do not pray for themselves. Wherefore are we taught to pray, but that we may be the mouth of others? And since an intercessor is given to us above, how are we bound to be intercessors for others below; and so to be affected with the common mercies of the multitude, as to give thanks too? If man, by the law of creation, is the mouth of the stones, trees, birds, beasts, of heaven and earth, sun, moon, and stars, how much more ought a Christian, a redeemed man, be the mouth of mankind, to praise God for the abounding of his goodness, even towards those who are left yet in that misery and bondage that he is delivered from?

Next, charity by all means will avoid scandal, and live honestly in the sight of all men; "Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God," 1 Cor. x. 32. And he adds his own example: "even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved," verse 33. Charity is not self-addicted; it hath no humour to please, it can displease itself to profit others. I do verily think there is no point of Christianity less regarded. Others we acknowledge, but we fail in practice; this scarce hath the approbation of the mind; few do conceive an obligation lying on them to it. But O how is Christianity, the most of it, humanity. Christ makes us men as well as Christians; he makes us reasonable men when believers. Sin transformed our nature into a wild, beastly, viperous selfish thing: grace restores reason and natural affection in the purest and highest strain. And this is reason and humanity elevated and purified, to condescend to all men in all things for their profit and edification, to deny itself to save others. Whatsoever is not necessary in itself, we ought not to impose a necessity upon it by our imaginat on and fancy, to the prejudice

of a greater necessity,—another's edification. Indeed, charity will not, dare not sin to please men; that were to hate God, and to hate ourselves, and to hate our brethren under a base pretended notion of love. But, I believe, addictedness to our own humours in things not necessary, which have no worth but from our disposition, doth oftener transport us beyond the bounds of charity than the apprehension of duty and conscience of sin. Some will grant they should be tender of offending the saints; but they do not conceive it is much matter what they do in relation to others, as if it were lawful to murder a Gentile more than a Christian. That is a bloody imagination opposite to that innocent Christian, Paul, Phil. ii. 15, we should "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we should shine as lights." And truly it is humanity, elevated by Christianity, or reason purified by religion, that is the light that shines most brightly in this dark world: Col. iv. 5, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without;" and 1 Thess. iv. 12, "Walk honestly toward them that are without;" avoiding all things, in our profession and carriage, which may alienate them from the love of the truth and godliness: walking so, as we may insinuate into their hearts some apprehensions of the beauty of religion. Many conceive, if they do good all is well; if it be a duty, it matters nothing: but remember that caution, "Let not, then, your good be evil spoken of," Rom. xiv. 16. We would have our eyes upon that too, so to circumstantiate all our duties, as they may have least offence in them, and be exposed to least obloquy of men. 1 Pet. ii. 12, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Then, *thirdly*, Charity follows peace with all men, as much as is possible, Heb. xii. 14. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," Rom.

xii. 18. Many spirits are framed for contention ; if peace follow them, they will flee from it. But a Christian having made peace with God, the sweet fruit of that upon his spirit is to dispose him to a peaceable and quiet condescendency to others; and if peace flee from him, to follow after it, not only to entertain it when it is offered, but to seek it when it is away, and to pursue it when it runs away, Psal. xxxiv. 14; which Peter urges upon Christians, 1 Pet. iii. 8—11, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." I think, since we obtained the mercy to get a peace-maker between us and God, we should henceforth count ourselves bound to be peace-makers among men. And, truly, such have a blessing pronounced upon them, Matt. v. 9, "Blessed are the peace makers." The Prince of Peace pronounced it; and this is the blessedness, "They shall be called the children of God:" because he is the God of peace; and to resemble him in these, first in purity, then in peace, is a character of his image. It is true, peace will sometimes flee so fast, and so far away, as a Christian cannot follow it without sin, and that is a breach of a higher peace. But charity, when it cannot live in peace without, it doth then live in peace within; because it hath that sweet testimony of conscience, that, as far as did lie in it, peace was followed without. Divine wisdom, James iii. 17, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without wrangling, and without hypocrisy. If wisdom be peaceable and not pure, it is but a carnal conspiracy in iniquity, earthly and sensual. But if it be pure, it must be peaceable; for the wisdom descending from above, it hath a purity of truth,

and a purity of love, and a purity of the mind and of the affection too. Where there is a purity of truth, but accompanied with envying, bitter strife, rigid judging, wrangling, and such like; then it is defiled, and corrupted by the intermixture of vile and base affections, ascending out of the dunghill of the flesh. The vapours of our lusts arising up to the mind, do incrassate pure truth, they put on an earthly, sensual, and devilish visage on it.

Charity, its conversation and discourse is without judging, without censuring, Matt. vii. 1. of which chapter, because it contains much edification, I shall speak more hereafter. James iii. 17, "Without partiality, without hypocrisy." The words in the original are *αδιακριτος και ανυπόκριτος*, without judging and wrangling, and without hypocrisy; importing, that great censurers are often the greatest hypocrites, and sincerity has always much charity. Truly, there is much idle time spent this way in discourses of one another, and venting our judgments of others. As it were enough of commendation for us to condemn others; and much piety to charge another with impiety. We would even be sparing in judging them that are without, 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. Reflecting upon them or their ways, hath more provocation than edification in it. A censorious humour is certainly most partial to itself, and self indulgent; it can sooner endure a great beam in its own eye, than a little mote in its neighbour's; and this shows evidently that it is not the hatred of sin, or the love of virtue, which is the single and simple principle of it; but self-love, shrouded under the vail of displeasure at sin, and delight in virtue. I would think one great help to amend this, were to abate much from the superfluity and multitude of discourses upon others; in the multitude of words there wants not sin, and in multitude of discourses upon other men there cannot miss the sin of rash judging. I find the saints and fearers of God commended for speaking often one *to* another, but not at all for speaking *of* one another. The subject of their discourse, Mal. iii. 16, certainly was of another strain, how

good it was to serve the Lord, &c., opposite to the evil communication of others there registered.

Charity is no tale-bearer; it goeth not about as a slanderer to reveal a secret, though true, Prov. xx. 19. It is of a faithful spirit to conceal the matter, Prov. xi. 13. Another man's good name is as a pledge laid down in our hand, which every man would faithfully restore, and take heed how he lose it, or alienate it by backbiting. Some would have nothing to say, if they had not others' frailties to declaim upon; but it were better that such kept always silent, that either they had no ears to hear of them, or know them, or had no tongues to vent them. If they do not lie grossly in it, they think they do no wrong. But let them judge it in reference to themselves: "A good name is better than precious ointment," Eccl. vii. 1, and "rather to be chosen than great riches," Prov. xxii. 1. And is that no wrong, to defile that precious ointment, and to rob or steal away that jewel more precious than great riches? There is a strange connection between these; "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer, nor stand against the blood of thy neighbour," Lev. xix. 16. It is a kind of murder, because it kills that which is as precious as life to an ingenuous heart. "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down to the innermost parts of the belly," Prov. xviii. 8; xxvi. 22. They strike a wound to any man's heart, that can hardly be cured; and there is nothing that is such a seminary of contention and strife among brethren as this. It is the oil to feed the flame of alienation; take away a tale-bearer, and strife ceaseth, Prov. xxvi. 20. Let there be but any (as there want not such who have no other trade or occupation) to whisper into the ears of brethren, and suggest evil apprehensions of them, they will separate chief friends, as we see it daily in experience, Prov. xvi. 28. Revilers are amongst those who are excluded out of the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 10. And therefore, as the Holy Ghost gives general precepts for the profitable and edifying improvement of the tongue, that so it may indeed be the glory of a man, (which truly is no small point

of religion, as James expresses, chap. iii. 2, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man"); so that same Spirit gives us particular directions about this, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law," James iv. 11; because he puts himself in the place of the Lawgiver, and his own judgment and fancy in the room of the law, and so judges the law; and therefore, the apostle Peter makes a wise and significant connection, 1 Pet. ii. 1, "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." Truly, evil speaking of our brethren, though it may be true, yet it proceeds out of the abundance of these in the heart,—of guile, hypocrisy, and envy. While we catch at a name of piety from censuring others, and build our own estimation upon the ruins of another's good name, hypocrisy and envy are too predominant. If we would indeed grow in grace by the word, and taste more how gracious the Lord is, we must lay these aside, and become as little children, without guile and without gall. Many account it excuse enough, that they did not invent evil tales, or were not the first broachers of them; but the Scripture joins both together,—the man that shall abide in his tabernacle must neither vent nor invent them, neither cast them down nor take them up; "He backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour;" Psal. xv. 3, or receives not, or endures not, as in the margin; he neither gives it nor receives he it; hath not a tongue to speak of others' faults, nor an ear to hear them; indeed, he hath a tongue to confess his own, and an ear open to hear another confess his faults, according to that precept, "Confess your faults one to another." We are forbidden to have much society or fellowship with tale-bearers; and it is added, Prov. xx. 19, "And meddle not with such as flatter with their mouth," as indeed commonly they who reproach the absent, flatter the present; a backbiter is a face-flatterer, and therefore, we should not only not meddle with them, but drive them

away as enemies to human society. Charity would in such a case protect itself, if I may so say, by an angry countenance, an appearance of anger and real dislike; as the north wind drives away rain, so that entertainment would drive away a backbiting tongue, Prov. xxv. 23. If we do discountenance it, backbiters will be discouraged to open their pack of news and reports; and, indeed, the receiving readily of evil reports of brethren, is a partaking with the unfruitful works of darkness, which we should rather reprove, Eph. v. 11. To join with the teller is to complete the evil report; for if there were no receiver, there would be no teller, no tale-bearer. "Charity covers a multitude of sins," 1 Pet. iv. 8; and, therefore, "above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves," says he. What is above prayer and watching unto the end, —above sobriety? Indeed, in reference to fellowship with God, these are above all; but, in relation to comfortable fellowship one with another in this world, this is above all, and the crown or cream of other graces. He whose sins are covered by God's free love, cannot think it hard to spread the garment of his love over his brother's sins. Hatred stirreth up strife, all uncharitable affections, as envy, wrath; it stirreth up contentions, and blazeth abroad man's infirmities. But love covereth all sins, concealeth them from all to whom the knowledge of them doth not belong, Prov. x. 12. Love in a manner suffers not itself to know what it knoweth, or at least to remember it much; it will sometimes hood-wink itself to a favourable construction; it will pass by an infirmity, and misken it, but many stand still and commune with it; but he that covereth a transgression seeks love to bury offences in. Silence is a notable mean to preserve concord, and beget true amity and friendship. The keeping of faults long above ground unburied, doth make them cast forth such an evil savour that will ever part friends. Therefore, says the wise man, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love, but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends," Prov. xvii. 9. Covering faults Christianly will

make a stranger a friend, but repeating and blazing of them, will make a friend not only a stranger but an enemy. Yet this is nothing to the prejudice of that Christian duty of reproving and admonishing one another. Eph. v. 11, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Love commands to reprove "in the spirit of meekness," Gal. vi. 1. As a man would restore an arm out of joint. "And, therefore, thou shalt not hate him in thy heart, but shall in any wise reprove him, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. xix. 17. And he that reproves his brother after this manner from love, and in meekness and wisdom, shall afterward find more favour of him than he that flatters with his tongue, Prov. xxviii. 23. To cover grudges and jealousies in our hearts, were to nourish a flame in our bosom, which doth but wait for a vent, and will at one occasion or other burst out. But to look too narrowly to every step, and to write up a register of men's mere frailties, especially so as to publish them to the world; that is inconsistent with the rule of love. And truly, it is a token of one destitute of wisdom to despise his neighbour; but a man of understanding will hold his peace. He that has most defects himself will find maniest in others, and strive to vilify them one way or other; but a wise man can pass by frailties, yea, offences done to him, and be silent, Prov. xi. 12.

CHAP. V.

Humility is the root of charity, and meekness the fruit of both. There is no solid and pure ground of love to others, except the rubbish of self-love be first cast out of the soul; and when that superfluity of naughtiness is cast out, then charity hath a solid and deep foundation. "The end of the command is charity out of a pure heart," 1 Tim. i. 5. It is only such a purified heart, cleansed from that poison and contagion of pride and self-estima-

tion, that can send out such a sweet and wholesome stream, to the refreshing of the spirits and bowels of the church of God. If self-glory and pride have deep roots fastened into the soul, they draw all the sap and virtue downward, and send little or nothing up to the tree of charity, which makes it barren and unfruitful in the works of righteousness, and fruits of mercy and meekness. There are obstructions in the way of that communication, which only can be removed by the plucking up these roots of pride and self-estimation, which preys upon all, and incorporates all in itself; and yet, like the lean kine that had devoured the fat, are never the fatter or more well-favoured.

It is no wonder then that these are the first principles that we must learn in Christ's school, the very A B C of Christianity; "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," Matt. xi. 29. This is the great Prophet sent of the Father into the world to teach us, whom he hath, with a voice from heaven, commanded us to hear, "This is my well-beloved Son, hear him." Should not the fame and report of such a teacher move us? He was testified very honourably long before he came, that he had the Spirit above measure, that he had the tongue of the learned, Isa. i. 4.; that he was a greater prophet than Moses, Deut. xviii. 15, 18; that is, the wonderful Counsellor of heaven and earth, Isa. ix. 6.; the witness to the people, a teacher and leader to the people. And then, when he came, he had the most glorious testimony from the most glorious persons, the Father, and the Holy Ghost, in the most solemn manner that ever the world heard of, Matt. xvii. 5, "Behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Now, this is our Master, our Rabbi, Matt. xxiii. 8. This is "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," Heb. iii. 1. "The light of the world and life of men," John viii. 12; vi. 33, 51. Having then such a Teacher and Master, sent us from heaven, may we not glory in our Master?

But some may suppose, that he who came down from heaven, filled with all the riches and treasures of heavenly wisdom, should reveal in his school unto his disciples, all the mysteries and profound secrets of nature and art; about which the world hath plodded since the first taste of the tree of knowledge, and beaten out their brains to the vexation of all their spirits, without any fruit, but the discovery of the impossibility of knowing, and the increase of sorrow by searching. Who would not expect, when the wisdom of God descends among men, but that he should shew unto the world that wisdom in the understanding of all the works of God, which all men have been pursuing in vain; that he by whom all things were created, and so could unbowel and manifest all their hidden causes and virtues, all their admirable and wonderful qualities and operations, as easily by a word, as he made them by a word; who would not expect, I say, but that he should have made this world, and the mysteries of it, the subject of all his lessons, the more to illustrate his own glorious power and wisdom? And yet behold, they who had come into his school and heard this Master and Doctor teach his scholars, they who had been invited to come, through the fame and report of his name, would have stood astonished and surprised to hear the subject of his doctrine; one come from on high to teach so low things as these: "Learn of me, I am meek and lowly." Other men that are the masters of professions, and authors of sects or orders, do aspire unto some singularity in doctrine, to make them famous. But, behold our Lord and Master, this is the doctrine he vents, it hath nothing in it that sounds high, and looks big in the estimation of the world. In regard of the wisdom of the world—it is foolishness. A doctrine of humility from the Most High! a lesson of lowliness and meekness from the Lord and Maker of all! there seems, at first, nothing in it to allure any to follow it. Who would travel so far as the college of Christianity to learn no more but this, when every man pretends to be a teacher of it?

But, truly, there is a majesty in this lowliness, and there is a singularity in this commonness. If we would stay and hear a little longer, and enter into a deep search of this doctrine; we would be soon charged and overcome with wonder. It seems shallow till ye enter, but it has no bottom: Christianity makes no great noise, but it runs the deeper: it is a light and overly knowledge of it, a small smattering of the doctrine of it, that makes men despise it and prefer other things; but the deep and solid apprehension of it will make us adore and admire, and drive us to an, *ah altitudo!* O the depth! As the superficial knowledge of nature makes men atheists, but the profound understanding of it makes men pious; so all other things, *vilescunt scientia*, grow more contemptible by the knowledge of them; it is ignorance of them which is the mother of that devout admiration we bear to them, but Christianity only *vilescit ignorantia clarescit scientia*, it is common and base, because not known; and that is no disparagement at all unto it, that there is none despises it, but he that knoweth it not, and none can do any thing, but despise all besides it that once knows it; that is the proper excellency and glory of it.

All arts and sciences have their principles and common axioms of unquestionable authority, all kinds of professions have some fundamental doctrines and points which are the character of them; Christianity hath its principles too, and principles must be plain and uncontroverted, they must be evident by their own light, and apt to give light to other things; all the rest of the conclusions of the art are but conclusions and deductions from them. Our master and doctor follows the same method: he lays down some common principles, some fundamental points of this profession, upon which all the building of Christianity hangs; "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." This was the high lesson that his life preached so exemplarily, and his doctrine pressed so earnestly; and in this he is very unlike other teachers, who impose burdens on others, and themselves do not so much as touch them.

But he first practises his doctrine, and then preaches it; he first casts a pattern in himself, and then presses to follow it: examples teach better than rules, but both together are most effectual and sure. The rarest example and noblest rule that ever were given to men, are here met together.

The rule is about a thing that has a low name, but a high nature. Lowliness and meekness in reputation and outward form, they are like servants; yet they account it no robbery to be equal with the highest and most princely graces The vein of gold and silver lies very low in the bowels of the earth, but it is not, therefore, base, but the more precious. Other virtues may come with more observation; but these, like the Master that teaches them, come with more reality; if they have less pomp, they have more power and virtue. Humility, how suitable is it to humanity? They are as near to him one to another, as *homo et humus;* and therefore, except a man cast off humanity, and forget his original—the ground—the dust from whence he was taken, I do not see how he can shake off humility: self-knowledge is the mother of it, the knowledge of that *humus* would make us *humiles;* look to the hole of the pit from whence thou art hewn; a man could not look high that looked so low as the pit from whence we were taken by nature, even the dust; and the pit from whence we are hewn by grace, even man's lost and ruined state: such a low look would make a lowly mind. Therefore, pride must be nothing else but an empty and vain tumour, a puffing up. Knowledge puffeth up; not self-knowledge, that casts down, and brings down all superstructures, razes out all vain confidence to the very foundation, and then begins to build on a solid ground: but knowledge of other things without, joined with ignorance of ourselves within, is but a swelling, not a growing; it is a bladder or skin full of wind: a blast or breath of an airy applause or commendation, will extend it and fill it full. And what is this else but a monster in humanity; the skin of a man stuffed or blown up with wind and vanity,

to the shadow and resemblance of a man, but no bones or sinews, nor real substance within? Pride is an excrescence; it is nature swelled beyond the intrinsic terms or limits of magnitude, the spirit of a mouse in a mountain. And now, if any thing be gone without the just bounds of the magnitude set to it, it is imperfect, disabled in its operations, vain and unprofitable, yea, prodigious like. If there be not so much real excellency as may fill up the circle of our self-estimation, then, surely, it must be full of emptiness and vanity; fancy and imagination must supply the vacant room, where solid worth cannot extend so far. Now, I believe, if any man could but impartially and seriously reflect upon himself, he would see nothing of that kind, no true solid and real dignity to provoke love; but real baseness and misery to procure loathing. There is a lie in every sin; but the greatest and grossest lie is committed in pride, and attribution of that excellency to ourselves which is not. And upon what erroneous fancy, which is a sandy and vain foundation, is built the tower of self-estimation, vain gloriation, and such like? Pride, which is the mother of these, says most presumptuously, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent," Isa. x. 13. "I am, and none else besides me," Isa. xlvii. 10. It is such a false imagination, "I am of perfect beauty," "I am and none else," "I am a god," Ezek. xxvii. 3, and xxviii. 2, which swells and lifts up the heart. Now, what a vain thing is it, an inordinate elevation of the heart upon a false misapprehension of the mind: "The soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him," Hab. ii. 4. It must be a tottering building that is founded on such a gross mistake.

Some cover their pride with the pretence of high spiritedness, and please themselves in the apprehension of some magnanimity and generosity. But the truth is, it is not true magnitude, but a swelling out of a superabundance of pestilent humours. True greatness of spirit is inwardly and throughout solid, firm from the bottom, and the

foundation of it is truth. Which of the two do ye think hath the better spirit, he that calls dust, dust, and accounts of dung as dung; or he that, upon a false imagination, thinks dust and dung is gold and silver, esteems himself a rich man, and raises up himself above others? Humility is only true magnanimity; for it digs down low, that it may set and establish the foundation of true worth. It is true, it is lowly, and bows down low; but as the water that comes from a height, the lower it comes down the higher it ascends up again; so, the humble spirit, the lower it fall in its own estimation, the higher it is raised in real worth and in God's estimation. "He that humbles himself shall be exalted, and he that exalts himself shall be abased," Matt. xxiii 12. He is like a growing tree, the deeper the roots go down in the earth; the higher the tree grows above ground; as Jacob's ladder, the foot of it is fastened in the earth, but the top of it reaches the heavens. And this is the sure way to ascend to heaven. Pride would fly up upon its own wings; but the humble man will enter at the lowest step, and so goes up by degrees, and in the end it is made manifest. Pride catches a fall, and humility is raised on high; it descended that it might ascend. "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit," Prov. xxix. 23. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall: but before honour is humility," Prov. xvi. 18, and xviii. 12. The first week of creation, as it were, afforded two signal examples of this wise permutation of divine justice: angels cast out of heaven, and man out of paradise; a high and wretched aim at wisdom brought both as low as hell; the pride of angels and men was but the rising up to a height, or climbing up a step to the pinnacle of glory, that they might catch the lower fall. But the last week of the creation, so to speak, shall afford us rare and eminent demonstrations of the other: poor, wretched, and miserable sinners lift up to heaven by humility, when angels were thrown down from heaven for pride. What a strange sight! an angel, once so glorious,

so low; and a sinner, once so wretched and miserable, so high! Truly, may a man conclude within himself, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud," Prov. xvi. 19. Happy lowliness, that is the foundation of true highness; but miserable highness, that is the beginning of eternal baseness. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 3. Blessedness begins low in poverty of spirit: and Christ's sermon upon blessedness begins at it, but it arises in the end to the riches of a kingdom, a heavenly kingdom. Grace is the seed of glory; and poverty of spirit is the seed, first dead before it be quickened to grow up in the fruits: And, indeed, "the grain is not quickened except it die," 1 Cor. xv. 36, and then it gets a body, "and bringeth forth much fruit," John xii. 24. Even so, grace is sown into the heart, but it is not quickened except it die in humility, and then God gives it a body, when it springs up in other beautiful graces,—of meekness, patience, love, &c. But those are never ripe till the day that the soul get the warm beams of heaven; being separated from the body, and then is the harvest,—a rich crop of blessedness. Holiness is the ladder to go up to happiness by; or rather, our Lord Jesus Christ is adorned with all these graces. Now, these are the steps of it mentioned, Matt. v.; and the lowest step that a soul first ascends up to him by, is poverty of spirit, or humility. And truly, the spirit cannot meet with Jesus Christ, till he first bring itdown low: because he hath come so low himself, as that no soul can ascend up to heaven by him, except they bow down to his lowliness, and rise upon that step.

Now, a man being thus humbled in spirit before God, and under his mighty hand, he is only fit to obey the apostolic precept, "be ye all of you subject one to another," 1 Pet. v. 5. Humility towards men depends upon that poverty and self-emptying under God's mighty hand, ver. 6. It is only a lowly heart that can make the back to bow, and submit to others of whatsoever quality, "and condescend

to them of low degree," Rom. xii. 16; Eph. v. 21. But the fear of the Lord humbling the spirit, will easily set it as low as any other can put it. This is the only basis and foundation of Christian submission and moderation. It is not a complimental condescendence; it consists not in an external shew of gesture and voice; that is but an apish imitation. And, indeed, often pride will palliate itself under voluntary shews of humility, and can dem't itself to undecent and unseemly submissions to persons far inferior; but it is the more deformed and hateful, that it lurks under some shadows of humility. As an ape is the more ugly and ill-favoured, that it is liker a man, because it is not a man; so vices have more deformity in them, when they put on the garb and vizard of virtue; only it may appear how beautiful a garment true humility is, when pride desires often to be covered with appearance of it, to hide its nakedness. O how rich a clothing is the mean-like garment of humility and poverty of spirit! "Be ye clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. It is the ornament of all graces; it covers a man's nakedness by uncovering of it. If a man had all other endowments, this one dead fly would make all the ointment unsavoury, —pride; but humility is *condimentum virtutum*, as well as *vestimentum;* it seasons all graces, and covers all infirmities. Garments are for ornament and necessity both; truly this clothing is alike fit for both, to adorn and beautify whatsoever is excellent, and to hide or supply whatsoever is deficient, *ornamentum et operimentum.*

The apostle Paul gives a solemn charge to the Romans, Rom. xii. 3, "that no man should think high of himself, but soberly, according to the measure of faith given." That extreme undervaluing and denial of all worth in ourselves, though it be suitable before God, Luke vii. 6, 7; Prov. xxx. 2, 3; Job xlii. 6; 1 Cor. iv. 7; yet it is uncomely and incongruous before men. Humility doth not exclude all knowledge of any excellency in itself, or defect in another it can discern; but this is the worth of it, that it thinks soberly of the one, and despises not the

other. The humble man knows any advantage he has beyond another, but he is not wise in his own conceit. He looks not so much upon that side of things, his own perfections and others' imperfections, that is very dangerous; but he casts his eyes most on the other side, his own infirmities and others' virtues, his worst part and their best part, and this makes up an equality or proportion. Where there is inequality, there is a different measure of gifts and graces, there are diverse failings, and infirmity, and degrees of them. Now, how shall so unequal members make up one body, and join unto one harmonious being, except this proportion be kept, that the defects of one be made up by the humility of another? The difference and inequality is taken away this way,—by fixing my eye most upon my own disadvantages and my brother's advantages. If I be higher in any respect, yet, certainly, I am lower in some, and therefore the unity of the body may be preserved by humility. I will consider in what I come short, and in what another excels, and so I can condescend to them of low degree. This is the substance of that which is subjoined, Rom. xii. 16, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." And this makes us meet in honour to prefer one another; taking ourselves up in the notion of what evil is in us, and another up in the notion of what good is in him,—Rom. xii. 10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." Thus there may be an equality of mutual respect and love, where there is an inequality of gifts and graces; there may be one measure of charity, where there are different measures of faith: because both neglect that difference, and pitch upon their own evils and another's good.

It is our custom to compare ourselves among ourselves, and the result of that secret comparison is estimation of ourselves, and despising others. We take our measure, not by our own real and intrinsic qualifications, but by the stature of other men's; and if we find any disadvantage

in others, or any pre-eminency in ourselves, in such a partial application and collation of ourselves with others, (as readily self-love, if it find it not, will fancy it) then we have a tacit gloriation within ourselves, and a secret complacency in ourselves. But the humble Christian dares not make himself of that number, nor boast of things without his measure; he dare not think himself good, because, *deterioribus melior*, better than others who are worse. But he judges himself by that intrinsic measure which God hath distributed unto him, and so finds reason of sobriety and humility; and therefore, he dare not stretch himself beyond his measure, or go without his station and degree, 2 Cor. x. 12, 13, 14. Humility makes a man compare himself with the best, that he may find how bad he himself is, but pride measures by the worst, that it may hide from a man his own imperfections. The one takes a perfect rule, and finds itself nothing; the other takes a crooked rule, and imagines itself something. But this is the way that unity may be kept in the body, if all the members keep this method and order, the lowest to measure by him that is higher, and the higher to judge himself by him that is yet above him; and he that is above all the rest to compare with the rule of perfection, and find himself further short of the rule, than the lowest is below him. If our comparisons did thus ascend, we would descend in humility, and all the different degrees of persons would meet in one centre of lowliness of mind. But while our rule descends, our pride ascends. The Scripture holds out pride and self-estimation as the root of many evils, and humility as the root of many good fruits among men. Only through pride comes contention, Prov. xiii. 10. There is pride at least in one of the parties, and often in both; it makes one man careless of another, and out of contempt not to study equity and righteousness towards him; and it makes another man impatient of receiving and bearing an injury or disrespect. While every man seeks to please himself, the contention arises. Pride in both parties makes both stiff and inflexi-

ble to peace and equity; and in this there is a great deal of folly; for, by this means, both procure more real displeasure and dissatisfaction to their own spirits. But with the well-advised is wisdom; they who have discretion and judgment will not be so wedded to their own conceits, but that in humility they can forbear and forgive for peace's sake. And though this seem harsh and bitter at first, to a passionate and distempered mind, yet, O how sweet is it after! There is a greater sweetness and refreshment in the peaceable condescendence of a man's spirit, and in the quiet passing by any injury, than the highest satisfaction that ever revenge or contention gave to any man. "When pride comes, then comes shame: but with the lowly is wisdom," Prov. xi. 2. Pride growing to maturity and ripeness, shame is near hand it, almost as near as the harvest; if pride come up, shame is in the next rank behind it. But there is a great wisdom in lowliness, and that is the honourable society that it walks in. There may be a secret connection between this and the former verse,—divers and false balances are abomination to the Lord; but a just balance is his delight. Now if it be so in such low things as merchandise, how much more abominable is a false spiritual balance in the weighing of ourselves? Pride hath a false balance in its hand,—the weight of self-love carries down the one scale by far.

Lowliness of mind is the strongest bond of peace and charity; it banishes away strife and vain-glory, and makes each man to esteem another better than himself, Phil. ii. 3, because the humble man knows his own inside, and only another's outside. Now, certainly the outside is always better and more specious than the inside; and therefore, a humble man seeing nothing but his neighbour's outside, and being acquainted thoroughly with his own inside, he esteems another better than himself. Humility, as it makes a man to think well of another, so it hinders him to speak evil of his brother. James iv. 10. He lays down the ground-work in the 10th verse, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

He raises his superstructure, ver. 11, 12, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one law-giver, who is able to save, and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" For truly, the very ground of evil-speaking of that nature, is some advantage, we conceive, that may redound to our own reputation, by the diminution of another's fame; or, because we are so short-sighted in ourselves, therefore, are we sharp-sighted towards others; and because we think little of our own faults, we are ready to aggravate other men's to an extremity. But in so doing, we take the place of the judge and law upon us, which judges others, and is judged by none. So we judge others, and not ourselves, neither will we suffer ourselves to be judged by others; this is to make ourselves the infallible rule,—to judge the law.

Humility levels men to a holy subjection and submission to one another, without the confusion of their different degrees and stations. It teaches men to give that respect and regard to every one that is due to his place or worth; and to signify it in such a way as may testify the simplicity of their estimation, and sincerity of their respect. Eph. v. 21, "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God." 1 Pet. v. 5, "All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." Now, if humility can put a man below others, certainly it will make him endure patiently and willingly to be placed in that same rank by others. When others give him that place to sit into, that he had chosen for himself, will he conceive himself wronged and affronted, though others about him think so? Nay, it is hard to persuade him of an injury of that kind; because the apprehension of such an affront hath for its foundation the imagination of some excellency beyond others, which lowliness hath razed out. He hath placed himself so low for every man's edification and instruction, that others can put him no lower; and there

he sits quietly and peaceably, *bene qui latuit bene vixit.* Affronts and injuries fly over him, and light upon the taller cedars, while the shrubs are safe.

> Qui cadit in plano, vix hoc tamen evenit ipsum.
> Sic cadit ut tacta surgere possit humo.

He sits so low that he cannot fall lower; so a humble man's fall upon the ground is no fall indeed, but in the apprehension of others: but it is a heavy and bruising fall from off the tower of self-conceit.

Now the example that is given us, "learn of me," is certainly of greater force to persuade a man to this humble, composed, and quiet temper of spirit, than all the rules in the world: that the Son of God should come down and act it before our eyes, and cast us a pattern of humility and meekness. If this do not prevail to humble the heart, I know not what can. Indeed, this root of bitterness, which is in all men's hearts by nature, is very hard to pluck up; yea, when other weeds of corruption are extirpated, this poisonable one, pride, groweth the faster, and roots the deeper. Suppose a man should be stript naked of all the garments of the old man, this would be certainly nearest his skin, and last to put off. It is so pestilent an evil, that it grows in the glass window as well as on the dunghill; and, which is strange, it can spring out of the heart, and take moisture and aliment from humility, as well as from other graces. A man is in hazard to wax proud, that he is not proud, and to be high-minded, because he is lowly; therefore, it is not good to reflect much upon our own graces, no more than for a man to eat much honey.

I know not any antidote so sovereign, as the example of Jesus Christ to cure this evil; and he himself often proposes this receipt to his disciples, John xiii. 13—17. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should

do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Matt. xi. 29, 30, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matt. xx. 27, 28, "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Might not that sound always in our ears,—the servant is not above his lord, the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister? O, whose spirit would not that compose! What apprehension of wrong would it not recompense? What flame of contention about worth and respect would it not quench? What noise of tumultuous passions would it not silence? Therefore, the apostle of the Gentiles prescribes this medicine, Philip. ii. 5—8, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." If he did humble himself out of charity, who was so high; how should we humble ourselves, both out of charity and necessity, who are so low? If we knew ourselves, it were no strange thing, that we were humble; the evidence of truth would extort it from us. But here is the wonder, that he who knew himself to be equal to God, should notwithstanding become lower than men; that the Lord of all should become the servant of all, and the King of Glory make himself of no reputation; that he pleased to come down lowest, who knew himself to be the highest of all; no necessity could persuade it, but charity and love hath done it. Now, then, ho monstrous and ugly a thing must pride be after this?

That the dust should raise itself, and a worm swell; that wretched miserable man should be proud, when it pleased the glorious God to be humble; that absolute necessity shall not constrain to this, that simple love persuaded him to! How doth this heighten and elevate humility, that such a One gives out himself, not only as the Teacher, but as the pattern of it; "Learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

THE END.

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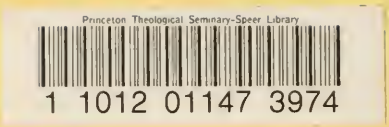
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